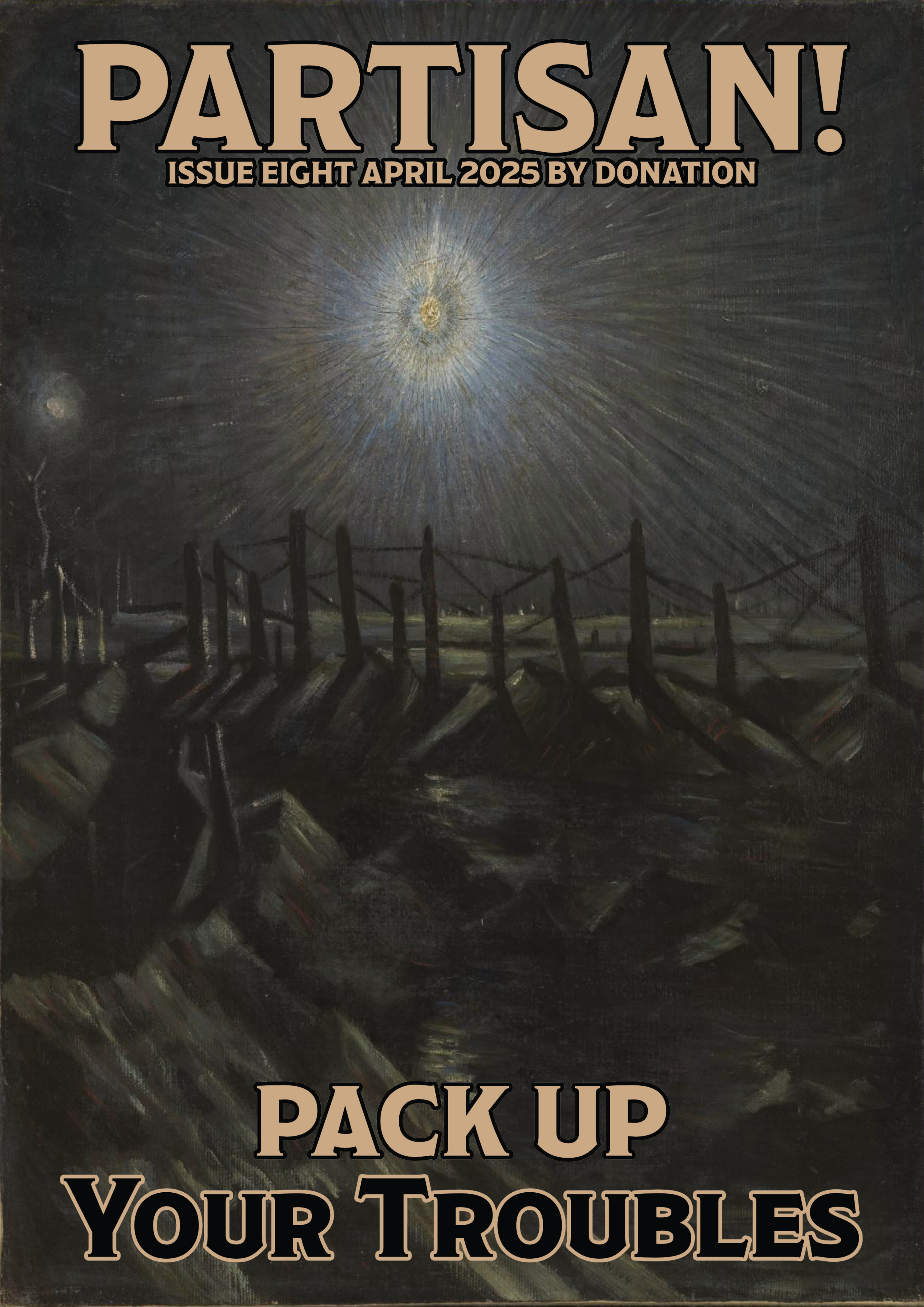
PARTISAN!
ISSUE EIGHT APRIL 2025 BY DONATION



PACK UP YOUR TROUBLES

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Submissions

Partisan accepts and encourages unsolicited submissions from left-wing radicals and militants of all backgrounds. Articles range from 800-1,000 words, essays run at a max 2,000. Word count is looser for letters, reports, etc, but we would encourage you to keep them concise.

Please proof-read etc prior to submitting. Our staff will also sub-edit as necessary. We publish monthly, so aim to submit before the 25th of the month at the absolute latest (15th-20th is ideal). Simultaneous submissions accepted on a case-by-case basis.

We are primarily interested in topics such as Marxist political economy, political strategy/tactics, engagement with Communists pasts and futures, critiques of Liberalism/Capitalism/etc, interviews, and features. Please include your name, a summary of the article, and any other relevant information (such as photos/images plus sourcing) in an email (see publishing contact).

Cover: A Star Shell, C. R. W. Nevinson, painting
Back: Young socialists in 'Student Underground' protesting against the Vietnam War, 1960s

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Subscriptions:

Print: $10 per month
Solidarity: $20 per month

See below for info.

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About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the ‘partyist left’ in Australia – that section of the left which views the formation of a mass workers party as its primary task.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states.

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Australia: Imperialist by nature, not by accident.

April sees a yearly uptick in flag-waving chauvinism around Anzac Day, and debates around nationalism and militarism. This month's issue is focused on imperialism - in particular, Australian imperialism, since Australia is an imperialist power in its own right (a fact neglected by much of the Left). While Australia is a junior partner to US imperialism, and US imperialism is "far worse" since the US has a greater capacity to exert itself internationally, Australian imperialism is far more pernicious and localised.

Historically, Australia has been a willing participant in imperialism, both of the imperialism of others (first the British, then the Americans), and its own imperialism. Narratives which float around occasionally about Australia being "dragged" into this-that-whatever imperialist venture are naive at best and obfuscating at worse. Australia eagerly participated in the world-historic blood-shedding of the first world war, which the Australian state saw as a proving ground to show the maturity of itself on the world stage.

After the second world war, Australia aligned itself with the at the time rising imperialist star: the United States. So Australia sent its troops to help invade Korea, sent its troops to help ravage Vietnam, sent its troops to help suppress militants across Indonesia and Malaysia, and then marched with Bush & Bush into the Middle East to pillage Iraq and Afghanistan for good measure.

What forces compel any capitalist state to be imperialist? The forces of the capitalist system itself - the need to expand into new markets, maintain control over the markets you already have, find new sources of cheap labour and material to exploit, to consolidate political alliances. Australia finds itself in a unique position, being a "developed" capitalist country plopped in the middle of the Asia-Pacific. This has allowed Australia to play its own hand, taking the role of imperialist overlord over Asia-Pacific countries such as Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and across Polynesia.

It does so with its own junior partner, New Zealand. In fact, "Australian imperialism" is a bit inaccurate. It is more accurate to describe it as "Australian-New Zealander Imperialism", though it doesn't roll off the tongue quite as well.

This month, we present to you, our beloved readers, once again with a set of quality and interesting articles produced by members and sympathisers of the RCO.

We publish two talks given by two RCO comrades at two Platypus Affiliated Society panels: one from Anthony Furia (in Melbourne), and another by Mila Volkova (in Canberra). In *Communists and the Whitlam Dismissal*, Porco recounts the 1975 dismissal of Labor PM Gough Whitlam and how communists should orient themselves around parliament. In *Social Patriotism and the Left*, Revmira analyses how the Ukraine war caused a split in the Australian Left between those who take a defencist position (in defence of Ukraine, the EU, and NATO), and those who don't.

We also republish a 2008 article from Lina Waldron, *ALP a boss's party; what about Greens?*, which analyses the at the time emerging Greens Party and whether it can be considered a viable alternative to the Labor Party. On that note, we also publish *Election 2025: What way for the working class?* from Edith Fischer, which answers the very same question Waldron attempts to answer in 2008 - albeit differently. We make a consistent, yet controversial, call to vote Socialists first, Labor second in this year's upcoming federal election.

Imperialism is the latest stage of capitalism, the current form that the capitalist world system takes. It is therefore not possible to, as some may posit, attack and destroy imperialism while the capitalist world system remains intact. Imperialism can only be abolished by a mass movement of the working class, organised into a party capable of leading the working class to power. Only by taking power and shattering the chains of domination can an emancipated society be established.

Solidarity,
Partisan Staff

Statement on the Communist Students' Collective (CSC)

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) condemns actions taken by the Communist Students Collective (CSC) against members of its Newcastle section, which have taken place since the CSC was formed in 2023. Leading CSC members, two of whom are former RCO members, have worked to put the RCO into disrepute, sabotaging political and industrial work being undertaken by comrades in Newcastle.

We make clear our condemnation of undisciplined conduct by those who call themselves 'communists', which not only harms comrades and sympathisers but also puts the movement into disrepute.

We also make clear that we strongly condemn abuse, harassment, and sexual misconduct, and hold true to communist and feminist principles: we believe abusers and harassers must be forced out of the movement.

Leading members of the CSC; Aiden Young, Max Brown (former RCO member), Theo Catt (former RCO member), Avery, and Danlo Moey, have worked together to sabotage attempts to unify communists and socialists in Newcastle. In particular, they have worked together to obfuscate, downplay, and cover for, allegations of rape and misconduct levied toward Theodore Catt.

Aforementioned members have also created an unprofessional culture within the CSC which encourages conformity, casual abuse, and in the extreme, sustained harassment of other members.

The RCO appeals to members of the CSC and those affiliated with it to do the following: organise together to remove the current leadership and established a principled campus organisation following communist politics, or failing that, to leave the CSC and make a serious regroupment.

We encourage members of the CSC to come forward with any knowledge they might have about abuses carried out by the CSC leadership. We also call for a serious investigation to be undertaken into aforementioned allegations of sexual misconduct levied against Theo Catt.

The working class does not care about gossip wars. However, the increasing visibility of such things only serves to put the entire movement into disrepute, turning away potential militants and radicals.

The RCO does not publicly comment on disputes with other groups on the Left, however, the nature of events in Newcastle requires an open and principled condemnation.

It is regrettable that it has become necessary to make a public statement on misconduct by the CSC as an organisation. The RCO believes in and supports a united communist movement, and their consolidation into a renewed Communist Party.

Trans liberation through workers liberation!

The state has launched yet another offensive against the bodily autonomy and rights of transgender youths, first through an attack against gender affirming care for under 18s in Queensland, and second through a federal "inquiry" into the use of hormones and puberty blockers for transgender children. The workers movement must defend the bodily autonomy of transgender children, youths, and workers. Communists must stand with transgender workers against these ongoing attacks.

Despite the shameless pinkwashing initiatives promoted by the Labor Party and the ACTU, these organisations do not meaningfully fight against these attacks, in and out of the workplace. The inaction of the Labor Party and the union bureaucracy rightfully pushes queer activists towards political alternatives: at times communists and socialists, most often the Greens.

But the reformist Greens and the progressive NGOs are wholly incapable and ill-equipped to carry out this liberation struggle in full. Instead, they aim to smooth out the quirks of capitalism to make it more bearable for queer and transgender workers. These are not quirks to be smoothed out, but structural features that cannot be overcome through legal recognition or welfare reform. Queer and transgender people must break with the reformist paradigm and seek an alternative. Communists must put forward this alternative.

This year on Transgender Day of Visibility, communists must put forward clearer demands and make known that the path to transgender liberation is inextricably tied to the path to the liberation of all workers – through the overturning of capitalist society. We must elevate the queer and transgender activist movement into a militant struggle alongside that of the working class.

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation raises the following revolutionary minimum demands, which will put power directly in the hands of the queer and trans workers, and begin the transition to communism:

- The decriminalisation of sex work and the unionisation of sex workers.
- Full provision of gender affirming care and transgender healthcare to any who desire it, regardless of age, wealth, or region.
- Expansion of youth gender clinics to make access to gender affirming care easier for transgender youth in all circumstances.
- Use of the "informed consent" model in every health clinic, allowing all people informed access to hormones, surgeries, and puberty blockers.
- Abolition of invasive surgeries on intersex children and youth.
- Universal healthcare and sex education.

While the rank-and-file of the working-class time and time again rejects these hostile attacks against it, our class's leadership in Labor and the ACTU actively sabotage these efforts. Therefore, communists must step forward and struggle for leadership of the movement against reformists in both the Labor Party and the Greens Party.

A renewed Communist Party, one that unites the sects and the entire socialist movement under a common program for seizing power, would be the only organisation capable of carrying out the struggle to its conclusion. Only by overturning capitalist society, which enforces and reproduces patriarchy and social domination, can we emancipate queer workers, transgender workers, and the working class in general.

What is capitalism, why should we be against it?

*The University of Melbourne chapter of the Platypus Affiliated Society held a panel on March 12th, discussing the topic of what capitalism is and why people should oppose it. We publish here an abridged version of the talk given by **Anthony Furia**, a panellist on behalf of the RCO. Jacob Andrewartha (Socialist Alliance) and Brendan Duncan-Shah (Red Ant) were also on the panel.*

"The Left is ... !
...ong live ... !"
Platypus ... Society

Panellists [L-R]: Anthony Furia (RCO), Brendan Duncan-Shah (Red Ant), and Jacob Andrewartha (Socialist Alliance. Ryan M (Platypus) moderates. Photo: Platypus Affiliated Society UniMelb

Good evening comrades - Platypus has prepared an excellent panel for all of you today, if I do say so myself, and I would like to thank my fellow panellists for their presentations. As part of such a panel, Platypus sent us all several sub-questions under the primary two of today, and I have, in my speech, addressed each in the order that made most sense to me. Rather boring, I know, but I prefer to keep things systematic; and pray I can add enough to the conversation to keep you all from falling asleep.

The first question was the shortest, and the shortest to answer; what is capitalism? Capitalism is, put extremely simply, a mode of production. A specific way of organising society, its production, reproduction, and distribution, predicated on a vast array of social relations of production, and their associated/accompanying means of production. More specifically, capitalist production (and thus capitalism) is defined by generalised commodity production, wage labour, the division and dominance of abstract value, and thus the extensive, continued, and ever-increasing self-valorisation of "capital" itself. Accompanying these defining features of capitalism are a range of other tendencies, developments, and historical features of capitalism that have defined its contemporary state as a totalising world-system constantly attempting to arrest history as it cannibalises upon nature, people, and ultimately itself.

The next question is whether capitalism is contradictory. There can be no response other than a resounding "yes". Yes, capitalism is contradictory. The very basis of communism is the most politically important contradiction of capitalism - one that continues to haunt social organisation, political struggle, and life itself - the contradiction between labour and capital. This contradiction, the existential distinction between those reliant on the wage fund (the proletariat) and those who embody the interests of capital (capitalists) in their ownership, often speculatively or abstractly, over means and relations of production, is of existential importance for communist politics.

It is wholly responsible for the revolutionary subject of communism - the international working class - without which communism is not only impossible but entirely unimaginable. The implicit and innate contradictions between the interests of this global working class and the interests of capital as embodied in both international and national capitalists are the very core of class struggle, and thus of the potential for class victory - for a different world, shaped by a global working class striving for its own abolition, determined to end the very system of social organisation which gave life to its revolutionary potential.

How does capitalism being contradictory pertain to "left politics?" It is its essence, its foundation, its light and air. It is the ultimate basis of such a politics, and the only consistently scientific motivation and comprehensive political understanding for communism. Not only is communism theoretically nonsensical without the contradiction between labour and capital, and thus between their embodiments in the working and capitalist classes, but it is wholly politically impossible.

This is not to say that capitalism does not possess several other and related tendencies and contradictions. Without the consistent, constant mediation of these tendencies by state and class forces both indirectly and directly, they may lead to capital's extinction. But such an extinction will be an extinction of life, not the victory of communism. The only immanently viable alternative to capitalist production, to the totalising, vampiric yet ouroboric self-valorisation of capital, is communism. A conscious project of proletarian self-emancipation and abolition.

Platypus asks how capitalism has changed overtime, and what these changes mean politically for "the left." Here I will substitute "the left" with communists - we are expressly excluding contemporary 'social democrats', 'progressives' and 'anti-capitalists,' as the origins and nature of their strategies are entirely distinct from ours and thus are shaped by changes in capitalism differently.

One of the primary features of capitalism I neglected to mention earlier was its tendency for constant innovation. Capital must reinvent itself and the world around it in an almost constant, furious, and irrational motion in an attempt to expand, consolidate, and expand again. Similarly, capital's penetration across the entire globe has facilitated major shifts in its organisation and concentration. This is epitomised particularly in imperialism as a world system of superexploitation and unequal exchange, able to ensure and maintain superprofits for multinational corporations based in the imperial core which have outsourced much of production to the global periphery.

This expansion of capitalism provided the means for capital's continued "Innovation," producing differing types of production, unique in content if not in fundamental form, such as the global relations of production responsible for commodities ranging from iPhone's to Coca-Cola, the rapid, extreme expansion of international financial and fictitious capital, and the shift to service work and unproductive labour in the imperial core.

Alongside these developments, and as a critical extension of them, is capital's ongoing and total war against its own old order. Against the grand compromise with an organised working class, and an extensive management of capital by the state in an attempt to stave off the worst of its own excesses. The Trump administration's struggle against the last remnants of the victories of the working class and concessions granted by capital for the sake of combating such a class at least partially embodies further attempts to privatise, financialise, and strip back nonprofitable state structure, in an embodiment of venture capital and a backwards, reactionary American petty bourgeois.

But before we address the implications of these developments for communists, we should aim to answer a few other questions Platypus has asked us. The first is whether class struggle takes place today, if so, how, and what role the 'left' should play in it. My answer to this should be quite clear from earlier discussion. It absolutely does take place today, as the contradiction that drives it forward, that between labour and capital, continues to overdetermine capitalist production.

However, contemporary class struggle is two things; disorganised and relatively one-sided. Disorganised, in that in the imperial core the moments of sincere 'resistance' by collective labour against capital are either spontaneous outbursts in the form of protests, demonstrations, and riots, or heavily choreographed instances of strikes and pickets, often mediated by a hesitant, conciliatory union bureaucracy quick to capitulate when politically viable. One-sided, as epitomised in the ongoing stripping back of any and all concessions granted by capital to labour in the imperial core, it is almost always capital on the offensive and organised labour in the retreat - routed, embattled, and encircled.

Platypus further asks us whether capital is in crisis. Maybe! The distinction between capitalism in crisis and capitalism operating in a 'functional' capacity is increasingly difficult to pinpoint. Is capitalism at risk of immanent, spontaneous collapse? Certainly not - but it is certainly not particularly healthy either. Increasing financialisation, speculation, and debt prop up production and exchange, and the fragility of such an arrangement seems to consistently teeter at the precipice, at the whim of increasingly abstracted, volatile market forces. Capital appears to be in a long, managed decline. Crises of social reproduction and of the total rupture of a metabolism between society and nature may not immediately concern capitalism but remain potentially existential threats.

Platypus then asks if a new era of global capitalism is emerging, and what it may look like. I think we must interrogate what we mean here by a new "era" of global capitalism. A new distribution of capital globally, reflected in and shaped by altered political allegiances and the return of inter-imperialist 'spheres of

Anthony Furia (RCO) speaks at Platypus panel. Photo: Platypus Affiliated Society UniMelb

influence' competition? That now seems to be almost guaranteed. But a new 'era' in the same sense that the logistics revolution or the communications revolution have heralded? That remains to be seen.

One could point to a multitude of developments; increasingly enclosed, monetised digital spaces, the explosive growth of speculative digital currencies, the casualisation and gig-ification of swathes of work, and the potentials of generative AI technology.

But to see any of these as indicative of a truly 'new' era and not an extension of processes and prior technologies would be unwise. The trends remain the same; monopolisation, financialisation, valorisation. If such developments are indicative of a new era, it is an era of increasing chaos for capital. A frantic scrambling to maintain and increase self-valorisation, to expand beyond and break every limit now established. It is an era that will be marked by an insanity, by the irrationality of capital, as it further breaks out of, and consumes, a world of its own creation. Rather than any coherent point of reference for such an era, its point of reference will be the lack of such a reference; a desperate search for productivity increases, and the violent suppression of wages.

Throughout the questions I have addressed, I have intentionally avoided answering three subsections raised by Platypus that I believe can be holistically summarised in a single question; what does this all mean for communists? Such a question is far from easy to answer, but there are two primary points that are particularly important to emphasise.

The first is that, in communist organisations, some of the age-old sins of the past - economism, workerism, and chauvinism, are not only taking on new life and forms but are more politically corrosive than ever. We cannot, for example, rely solely on the imminent economic interests of sections of the working class (such as those of the Australian working class) for political guidance, when expressions of those interests may at times contradict proletarian internationalism; the recognition of the class as an international whole with collective interests.

We cannot give one inch to the interests of the Australian state, whether nationally or abroad, as some communists have done with their position on the inter-imperialist war in Ukraine. Now, more than ever, must we combat these spontaneous, natural opportunistic tendencies that spread like weeds through a spirited and constant uprooting. Through passionate, public, and expansive debate and argumentation against them and the positions they produce.

Capital's current relentless war against the victories of the working class and the safeguards against its own irrationality should produce a rude and much needed political awakening for communists; we are weak. We are divided. And we are, currently, totally unable to mount meaningful resistance to the whims of even an increasingly fractured capitalist class. It is embarrassing, but unexpected - and this time of shock, of horror, should be a time for political reflection. For introspection. How have we ended up in the state we are, particularly in the imperial core, and how can we get ourselves out of it?

The answer the RCO provides to this question, and I, of course, think is most pertinent, centres on the question of the communist party. In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the failures of spontaneism, horizontalist organising, and prefigurative politics, the importance of a mass, democratic, militant working-class organisation - a political party - is utterly clear. In the face of hapless resistance, of a communist left hopelessly divided and split upon theoretical minutiae and embarrassingly minor historical differences, the necessity of a united communist movement - of a communist party - is paramount. The revival of partyism, of the conscious construction of a communist party, is the political consequence of capitalism's one-sided class struggle.

Reformism in distress at Newcastle IWD

Newcastle's International Women's Day (IWD) march and rally had enthusiasm and hopeful energy, but the (unsurprising) dominance of the Labor Party, and a reformist feminist orientation, left much to be desired. ***Max J*** *reports on the rally.*

HUNTER WORKERS
Women's Committee
ORGANISE

Protesters gather to march from Gregson Park through Hamilton, 9th March 2025. Photo: Max J

The fight for women's liberation continues. March 9th saw Newcastle's unionists, militants and reformists rally for the cause of women's rights, though political demands were often weak and lent credence to the Labor Party's project of an 'inclusive capitalism'. The rally was attended by the usual line up: Labor Party, Greens, some trade unionists, Hunter Workers (the trades hall), and a small grouping of socialists (from the RCO, the Spartacist League, and some unaffiliated). The CPA's skeleton crew also attended.

A split is forming, or at least is visible in the 'feminist movement' in Australia. There are right-wing feminists who want women to occupy positions of power over other women – this was initially reflected in the UK's Margaret Thatcher and can be seen with many Liberal Party women.

Labor has spawned a tradition of labourist feminists, some of whom emerge out of the trade union movement, but mainly are lower-case liberal feminists who view the feminist project as being equality under capitalism: women occupying the same social and political space as men. But unfortunately, capitalism doesn't work like that. While we can demand til we're blue in the face that women have equal pay, equal hours, etc to male workers, this amounts to very little without a fundamental shift in the economy and society.

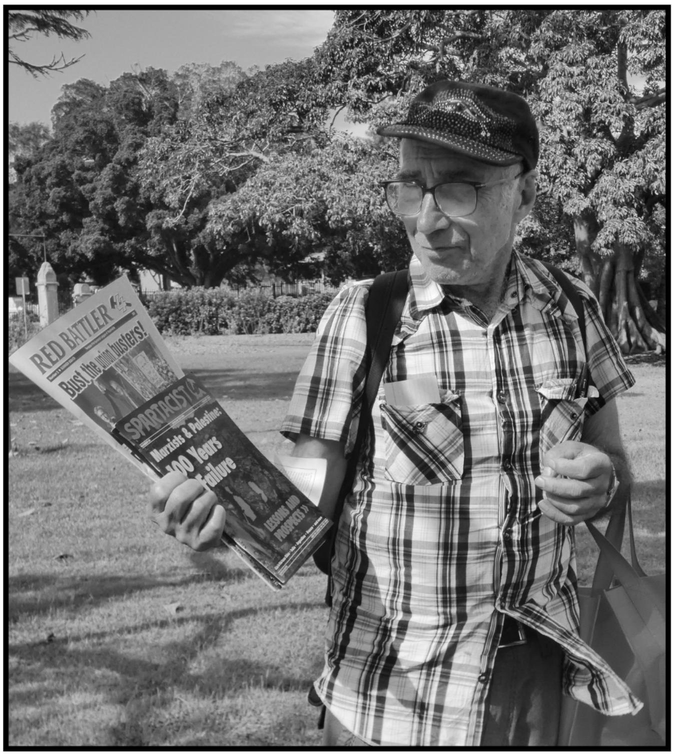
Much of the political demands too were centred on the Labor-Green campaign to scaremonger over a Dutton administration. While Peter Dutton is a pretty staunch conservative, it is hard to imagine that a Dutton government would be any worse (or better, really) than the Scott Morrison government, and while Morrison ran a disaster regime, it was hardly the Fourth Reich.

Scaremongering and alarmism over a potential LNP victory at a time when awareness of the failure of the Labor Party to uphold their promises is a tried and true diversionary tactic used by many a reformist. It shows that in Australia, reformism is well and truly in distress. Lacking a genuine platform for change and desperate to remain in power, they kick up a panic in an appalling attempt to scare people into voting for them. Far from being unique to Labor and the Greens, even Socialist Alternative has fallen into this trap.

Communist demands for women's liberation are (relatively) simple: we want to uproot the state and capital, and emancipate women from the dual-drudgery of domestic and industrial labour. Only a campaign of socialisation, shattering the bourgeois lifestyle enforced on the working class by the state and the capitalist class, can provide the social conditions necessary for women's emancipation.

Notably, while Labor and the Greens will call for gender equality and equal pay for men and women (fine demands on their own), they will not call for mass organisations of women workers, wages for housework (an old demand of a long gone feminist movement), full-time public works programs for women (to escape the informal and family business sector), or even self-defence organisations for women (as the Spartacist League demands in Mexico – guns for women!).

Although we have these demands, we are hardly positioned to push for them effectively. This is why it is increasingly important to win over workers of all kinds to a communist program (in particular women workers) and to communist organisations. Queensland comrades have attempted to do so via a communist women's front (the launching of which was delayed by a cyclone). Communists support solid and serious demands for women – we just need to do more to make our case, and make it a bit better.



Mike, Spartacist. Photo: Max J

Join the RCO!

Are you critical of the status quo? Do you support the working class taking power? Are you against bigotry, oppression, discrimination, and poverty?

If yes, you might be a communist.

revcomorg.info/get-involved

FREE PALESTINE!
FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA
SMASH IMPERIALISM WITH WORLD REVOLUTION
REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST ORGANISATION
Down with Racist &

Demand Freedom for Leftist Political Prisoners

As Russia continues to wage an imperialist war against Ukraine, Communists of all stripes have fallen under the boot of state repression (both in Russia and Ukraine). Oppose the Moscow and Kyiv gangsters, demand the release of all political prisoners. Russian Marxist Boris Kagarlitsky was imprisoned by the Russian state under phoney "anti-terrorism" charges in 2023. As of February 2024, he has been sentenced to five years in a prison colony (Meduza).

Ukrainian Trotskyist Bogdan Syrotiuk was arrested by the Ukrainian Security Service on April 25th 2024. As of writing, he is being held in Nikolaev in deplorable conditions. He is being falsely charged with being a Russian state operative and a propagandist for Moscow's imperialist invasion. If found guilty, he faces a life sentence (WSWS).

Many more communists, trade unionists, and anti-war protesters are being incarcerated arbitrarily by the Russian and Ukrainian governments. We must support them all, and demand their immediate release.

In addition, the Partisan calls for the freedom of all political prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier who still languish in the prisons of the American imperialists. In Britain, the Filton 10 now face years in prison for their actions against the war profiteers at Elbit Systems. One of these comrades, Zoë Rogers, has just spent her 21st birthday behind bars.

In Australia, activists from Blockade Australia, Fireproof Australia and other groups are held in detention, or under surveillance by state intelligence. With a ceasefire in Gaza, we must not forget the tens of thousands of Palestinians who languish in Israeli prisons and detention centres. We encourage communists and militants of all kinds of agitate for the release of all political prisoners, be they communists, militants, activists or other kinds of radicals.

Who's afraid of identity?

Debates over identity and intersectionality take place across the Left cyclically every few months or so. ***Luca Fraillon*** *analyses the identity impasse.*

TRANS RIGHTS NOW!
COMMUNITY ACTION FOR RAINBOW RIGHTS
PROTECT TRANS KI
STAND WITH TRANS KIDS

Community Action for Rainbow Rights (CARR)

Every few months those on the socialist left, especially those active in online spaces, are drawn into a toxic and destructive debate over what is loosely termed "identity politics". Generally, it follows a predictable format:

Person A: "Here is a way that a specific group of people is marginalised".

Person B: "The root of that marginalisation is class"

Person A/C/D/E: "That's class reductionist"

Person B/F/G/H: "You're a liberal"

Person ______: "You're a tankie"

Result: everyone hates each other, and no genuine debate occurs.

As is evident, two generally sound and not necessarily contradictory propositions – that people of specific social groups experience unique marginalisation, and that such marginalisation has a material basis – very quickly dissolve into name calling, straw manning, and general mudslinging. I want to examine what a genuinely Marxist view of identity is, whether it is really incompatible with ideas such as intersectionality, and a way forward for Marxist intervention in all liberatory struggles.

What is identity?

When talking about identity it is useful to define what is meant by the term, yet this key step is often missed in diatribes on the importance/harm/purpose of identity. An identity in mathematics and identity in sociological terms, though appearing separate upon a cursory pass, derive from the same maxim – the law of identity. The law of identity is as follows:

A=A

In words, all things are self-equal. However, this tells us nothing of substance about what 'A' is – to do that, we must contrast it with what it is not, 'not-A'. Identities are found in opposition, whether in math, philosophy, or as sociological categories.

Hegel importantly notes that identity is both positive and negative. Take, for example, the category of a cake – when we say a chocolate cake is a cake, we hold that there is some aspect of the chocolate cake that is shared as common across all cakes. This is the positive aspect of identity, the "identical self-relation". However, the same statement also holds a negative, by which it separates cake as a category itself; the chocolate cake cannot be "not-cake". This is the negative aspect of identity. Both contain the other within them – there can be no 'sameness' without 'difference', and vice-versa. In short, identities are dialectical.

Social identities

When talking about social identities, these same fundamental principles apply; identities are dialectical. They are also, importantly, material. It is the latter that often serves as a point of contention, and leads to accusations of class reductionism – as such, we must be extremely precise and clear in our explanation of it.

Let's take ourselves to a time and place where communalism, what Marx might call 'primitive communism', was the dominant mode of production. Pick any social identity and think about whether it would have existed in this society. This isn't asking whether the traits that make up the identity today would have existed, but whether the identity itself would have. Here, even something simple like age falls apart. Despite having been alive for 26 years, telling someone in the early stone age that they are 'pushing 30' wouldn't make much sense.

The conditions for numerical age to emerge as an identity, namely the codification of the division of labour, simply don't exist. However, telling them they've been alive for 13 migration cycles of a bird that forms an aspect of their diet would make a lot more sense. This is why some cultures today may count age in winters, or rice harvests, rather than years – the mode of production of their society is what determines identity.

This analysis is what holds the key to understanding social identities today. Let's use it to examine gender. Gendered identities must arise from the demands of the mode of production of the era. In the era of capitalism, gender serves to uphold the division between productive and reproductive labour – labour which produces capital, and labour which reproduces the conditions necessary for the production of capital. Gendered identities, as all identities, must be oppositional, defined in relation to one another.

However, importantly, here arrive the categories of 'Self' and 'Other', or 'Subject' and 'Object'. Social identities exist such that one is defined negatively and the other positively, despite the fact that both must necessarily hold both negative and positive difference as described by Hegel. While productive labour cannot exist without reproductive labour, it is reproductive labour that is defined by its usefulness to productive labour and not the other way around. As such, women are defined generally by the negative aspect of identity – the ways they are not men – while maleness is accepted as the default 'Self' or 'Subject'. If you're interested in reading more about this specifically, I would recommend the introduction of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex.

Class reductionist?

Where does class fit into this? We've shown how identity ultimately arises out of production – is this class reductionist? No. Class is not the mode of production. There is a substantial and important difference between saying that "everything comes back to class", and "everything comes back to material conditions".

Class itself is an identity, and perhaps the most obvious one. The proletariat are defined in relation to the bourgeoisie. We can see that Subject/Object dichotomy at play here – the proletariat are in service of the bourgeoisie, defined negatively by their lack of ownership over the means of production.

However, we can also see how asserting the positive aspect of identity – identical self-relation – is essential to transcending this dichotomy; only by identifying commonality as a class is class consciousness and thus revolution possible. And this is the unique feature of class – as class conflict drives changes in the mode of production, only it can create the conditions necessary for substantial shifts in all identities.

Where most liberals and some Marxists fall into a false analysis of Marxist views of identity is in imagining some sort of "identity hierarchy", where class is at the top and all other identities are subordinate to it. Here, there is no point in caring about the struggles of queer people, women, or people of colour, since they are simply distractions from the larger, more important, class struggle. This is a fundamentally idealist conception of identity.

All identities arise from material conditions, the mode of production of any given society. The struggles of queer people, women, and people of colour are thus intimately linked to the struggle against capitalism, and do not exist in opposition to it.

Intersectionality

The term 'intersectionality' is sometimes met with eye rolls by those on the socialist left, who see it's proponents as the epitome of so-called "liberal identity politics". In the same way that the material basis of identity is too often misunderstood, I argue that intersectionality is misrepresented in some left-wing circles when it is a vital analytical tool for Marxist sociological analysis.

What does intersectionality say? The concept itself is not that complicated. Using the example given by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a black, proletarian woman experiences unique challenges. That's really all it says. As Marxists, we already know this – a bourgeois woman and a proletarian woman may both be impacted by the patriarchy, though in extremely different ways to extremely different degrees. Having this basic understanding allows us to open up new, interesting, and important cultural analyses. For example, given that black people have been masculinised in cultural hegemony as a result of material systems of domination such as slavery and imperialism, black women experience femininity differently to white women.

Note that the analysis does not lose its material character, it just allows for greater nuance and a more scientific analysis of specific cultural groups. This is the inevitable consequence of decades of advancement in social sciences allowing for greater focus on more specific communities, and not a neoliberal plot to destroy class consciousness. While crude applications of intersectionality reach liberal idealist conclusions, historical materialist applications of it allow for an important Marxist analysis of specific cultural phenomena.

What now?

There are a few important conclusions that emerge from this analysis of identity. Firstly, identities emerge from specific material conditions. Secondly, class does not exist at the top of a hierarchy of 'more' to 'less' important identities – all identities are the result of the mode of production of society. Thirdly, the working class is the only group which can change the mode of production of society.

The only possible action to draw from this is that a mass workers party is needed in order to promote the liberation of all groups from systems of oppression and unite the working class in opposition to all forms of oppression. It would be foolish to assume that a revolution would immediately result in the overthrow of all discrimination. Class struggle alone will never overthrow racial, gendered, or sexual oppression, which are so ingrained in the cultural psyche; stop adding fuel to a fire and it will not stop burning.

This is why any communist party must be committed to all struggles for liberation, while recognising that a change in the mode of production is a necessary condition for any liberation. It must, as an act of urgency, revive Marxism as an academic and intellectual tradition. This means a materialist analysis of all forms of oppression and marginalisation, and a commitment to thorough, rigorous, open, and constructive debate. Let's just leave the name calling at the door.

The Crisis of Liberal Democracy

The Australian National University (ANU) chapter of the Platypus Affiliated Society held a panel on March 20th, on the subject of the ongoing crisis in liberal democracy. We publish here an abridged version of the talk given by ***Mila Volkova*** *of the RCO. Daniel Lopez (Jacobin AU) and Finnian Colwell (Solidarity) were also on the panel.*

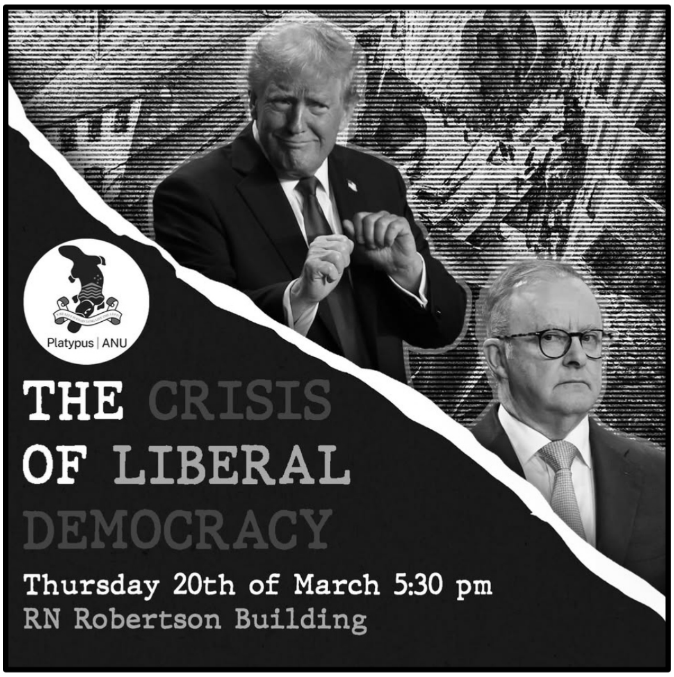
What do we mean when we address the "crisis of liberal democracy"? I would like to begin with a general theory of the capitalist state, as well as a broad history of it, but I don't have time. So, let's focus on the state which we encounter today, the neoliberal one. It's predecessor, the project state, through its strategy of total mobilisation, swallowed up more and more of society into its administrative and economic apparatuses, and subordinated them to the state's executive branch, at the expense of the legislature, judiciary, and political parties.

In the transition from the project state to the neoliberal state, the economic-administrative apparatuses of the state were basically expelled and given over to global finance. They were then systematically annihilated. The process of financialisation, assisted by computerisation, allowed for a globe-spanning "rationalisation", whereby finance disintegrated and shuffled around entire sectors of capital for the continued survival of the overall capitalist system. The welfare arm of the state has lost all its social function, instead existing solely to discipline the working class, whose enforcement is contracted out to the private sector. NGOs and "human resources" have ballooned to make up this yawning hole. The neoliberal state now serves little economic function except as the primary lender, and occasionally stimulus provider, though this role has increased in significance. In a financialised economy, bonds and interest rates play a critical role in supporting the profitability of financial assets, and thus the entire economy.

Furthermore, the ideological apparatuses that were formally part of the state, or partnered with it, have declined in prominence. The hegemonic ideology of the capitalists is no longer primarily spread through schools, trade unions, or political parties, but instead through mass and social media. The result is a state in constant anxiety, yet with little capacity to act.

While this transformation certainly defeated the crisis facing the project state; mass workers militancy was destroyed and overproduction was dealt with, the neoliberal state finds itself in its own crisis of reproduction.

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall was not halted, only temporarily reversed and only in certain sectors. Globalisation and the subjugation of production to constant financial oversight was intended to maximise thin profit margins, but it has only accelerated their thinning in the long term. Increasingly complex global markets have accelerated inflation and make market crises more



Thursday 20th of March 5:30 pm
RN Robertson Building

common. This is a self-reinforcing tendency. Low profits in manufacturing, and other "productive" sectors of capital, push investment towards speculation on financial assets. A vicious cycle develops: a high ratio of technology to human labour in manufacturing increases the cost of investment while promising low returns, so capital moves to financial assets, which leads to an underinvestment by finance and the state in healthcare and education. Thus, the quality of labour decreases, leading to stagnating productivity, and an even lower rate of profit in productive capital, leading to further financialisation. The state can do little but support this process, having been stripped of its capacity to do much else, through the now universal practice of quantitative easing.

Arguably, the ideological state apparatuses are actually at their most powerful in history, in relation to the other apparatuses. Mass and social media have successfully diffused ideological reproduction throughout the entire working class, which has successfully obscured the role of such media, and ideology in general, in reproducing the hegemony of the capitalists. The relations of production have never been so obfuscated. However, this diffusement necessarily brought with it a degree of democratisation. While this has strengthened ideology, it has also destabilised it. This is one explanation for the explosion in subversive "subcultures" such as Queer identification and incel-dom.

We have yet to address the most dramatic cause of the crisis of reproduction – the inclusion of married women into the workforce. The inclusion of married women into the workforce has destabilised the patriarchal mode of reproduction. This mode of reproduction is necessary to capital for numerous reasons: the literal reproduction of the workforce, the outsourcing of care labour from which, though unpaid, the capitalist extracts enormous surplus value, ensuring the continued existence of financial assets (especially the mortgage) through time, and the sustainability of racial hierarchies in the age of mass migration and refugees. In general, the fact that women in the imperial core can generally earn a living without relying on a man, has destabilised the stratification between male and female proletarians, much to the rage of an enormous minority of young men.

All these forces have led to what most call "populism" today. I will not attempt to formulate a general theory of populism, or even a definition, but will rather focus on Trump's coalition specifically. This coalition is an alliance between suburban middle America, small businesses, manufacturing and extractive capital, and a section of finance capital including private funds, venture capital, and big tech. In the project-state which preceded the neoliberal state, competing sectors of capitalism were balanced through the state's enormous economic apparatuses under the watchful eye of the executive branch. Since the neoliberal state essentially granted these apparatuses to international mutual funds like Blackrock wholesale, it has wielded them to its own sectoral interests against all others.

The ability of this coalition to become conscious of this, and to organise itself to seize power, is reflective of the instability in the ideological state apparatuses (and state apparatuses generally, in fact). These forces specifically have much to lose from the inclusion of women into the workforce. Small businesses are reliant on racialised and feminised wages, manufacturing capital relies on the collaboration of white workers against black workers, and private property generally speaking requires that reproduction be subjugated to private (i.e male) interests, which explains the rabid misogyny of suburbia.

Although this movement resembles fascism, it possessed basically the same class composition, it differs in several key ways. These differences are often obscured by the accusation of "fascism" directed towards the Trump coalition, even if there are certainly fascists within it, so I would like to problematise this accusation. Firstly, while fascism was a reaction against the mass socialist movements of the early 20th century, this cannot be said about Trump. As I have outlined, it is a reaction to different things.

Secondly, the Republican party does not mean to build a total mobilisation state. Rather, they aim to reshape the state to guarantee the defence of petty property and privilege. Thirdly, although there may be a mass movement behind Trump, it is not a particularly organised one. Furthermore, despite what liberals may fear, there is not a particularly strong paramilitary wing to this movement, a key trait of fascism. Finally, the fascists aimed to construct a corporatist state that included the working class, balancing classes against one another in support of national projects, whereas Trump has zero corporatist intentions.

Due to the crisis of reproduction neoliberalism has brought on the liberal democratic state, and capitalism in general, this faction's only option for the conquest of power was through undemocratic means. Winning the popular vote means very little for anyone in the context of a deeply gerrymandered system with extremely low voter turnout. We will likely see an attack on liberal democracy during Trump's presidency for the same reasons and to maintain this rule. To appease my Platypus hosts, I will add that this is the "rational kernel" of the Trump movement. We are in an epoch where the contradictions of capital are so heightened, that liberal democracy itself seems to have become structurally unsustainable. So far, only this movement has successfully gone about seizing power to finish it off.

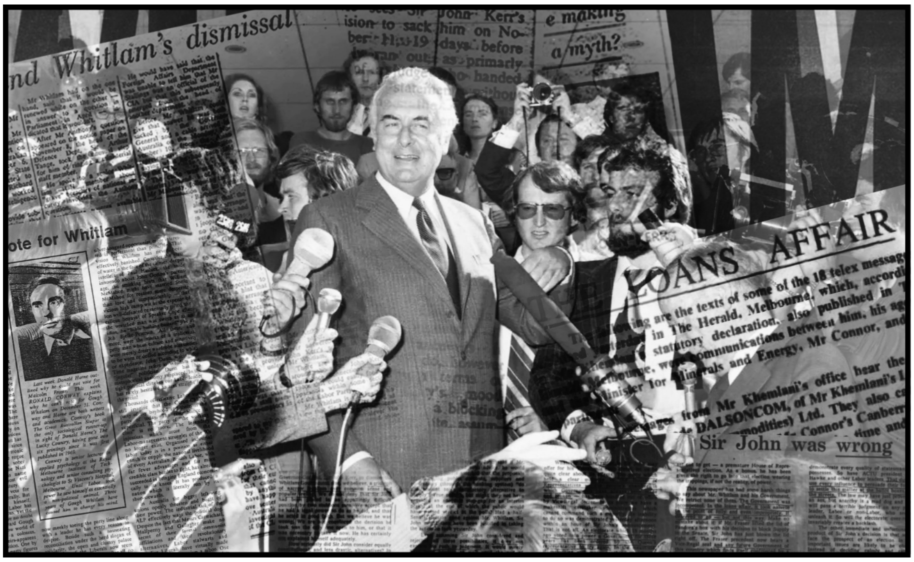
What new form of state will arise after liberal democracy? This is an open question. At the very least, we can say that Trump is pushing for the enhancement of the repressive apparatuses of the state, and a reliance on the ideological state apparatuses of the church and mass and social media. On the other hand, China seems to be the only nation-state that avoided the structural pressure that transformed the project state into the neoliberal state, adopting a hybrid sort of model. Although, it seems unlikely that China could successfully replace the USA as global imperial hegemon, and enforce its state model on others, without fundamentally breaking the capitalist mode of production.

We return to the age-old question – what is to be done? While the dominant tendency in the socialist movement currently, economism, was already dubious in Marx and Lenin's eras, it is certainly more so now. It is obvious that we must rebuild the organs of working-class struggle, such as trade unions, but we can now rely even less on the base tendencies of militancy, struggle, and economic crises to transform economic struggles spontaneously into political revolutions. The negative tendency of capital, arguably Marx's greatest flaw for not noticing, of disintegration, stratification, and atomisation, has won out over the positive tendency on which the mass workers movements of the past relied upon to unify themselves. The economistic strategy, epitomised in both my comrades on this panel today, has failed for forty years. It is increasingly clear that a-political "base-building" has stalled. Only an organised vanguard, which unites the sects, and which agitates in favour of economic demands for openly political reasons, can rebuild the organs of struggle.

But more than that, in the current era of financial mobility, it is increasingly clear that we cannot achieve even economic struggles without demands for state intervention. Thus, successfully organising around economic demands seems unfeasible without explicit politicisation, and an explicit theory of the state. The question of combining the economic and political struggles imposes itself stronger than before. Indeed, the need to win concessions that supports the self-organisation of the proletariat is greater than ever. Finally, for our economic struggles to be successful in the age of de-industrialisation, our demands must overflow the trade unions and enter the realms of debtor, tenant, consumer, welfare, and household organising, and that we address war and imperialism with more emphasis.

To find out more about the Platypus Affiliated Society, visit: platypus1917.org

Communists and the Whitlam Dismissal



Whitlam dismissal collage, by Porco

The 1975 dismissal of Labor PM Gough Whitlam was a watershed moment in post-war Australian politics. ***Porco*** *writes about the dismissal and what it means for communists in Australia today.*

Almost 50 years ago, Gough Whitlam was sacked as Prime Minister of Australia. The Labor Party, which still held a majority in the House of Representatives, was removed from government. The Governor General, Sir John Kerr, using the ‘reserve powers’ of the Crown, had conspired with Liberal Party leader Malcolm Fraser to “dismiss” Whitlam.

Fraser was allowed to appoint a cabinet, and “governed” with a minority for over a month before an election was held. The Labor Party passed no confidence motions and protested this move as unconstitutional in the subsequent election. But the damage had been done. Labor lost 30 seats to the Opposition. Gough Whitlam held on as Labor leader until 1977 but after losing another election to Fraser, his career as ALP leader was over.

Communists can learn from the way this crisis unfolded and what the events imply about the constitutional system we are forced to struggle within. The constitutional monarchy has not been meaningfully reformed since the dismissal.

The Dismissal

In 1969 half a million workers took part in strikes across Australia, defeating repressive federal penal laws that allowed the state to prosecute striking workers and unions. Indigenous land rights were becoming central to the struggles of Aboriginal workers on the Wave Hill cattle station.

This labour militancy was the culmination of two decades of uninterrupted postwar growth. The Labor Party almost won in 1969, just missing out on a majority by 4 seats. Graham Freudenberg, Whitlam’s speechwriter, notes in his book A Certain Grandeur that:

“The odd thing about 1969 was that Whitlam was actually helped by the buoyant economy. ... It was precisely because the younger middle class electors felt content and confident that Whitlam's appeal attracted them. Whitlam raised expectations and those electors could see no reason why their expectations could not be met.”

By 1972, the labour movement was confident and ready to support a Labor Government’s social democratic program. Whitlam's slogan was “It’s time.” Labor was ready to take the reins of the country after twenty three years of continuous Liberal/National Country Party rule. Whitlam’s campaign speeches reveal a palpable sense of optimistic fervour.

The Labor Party was elected in 1972. In the first few weeks, Whitlam and his deputy prime minister Lance Barnard pulled Australian troops out of Vietnam, released all imprisoned “draft dodgers” and recognised the People’s Republic of China.

The Whitlam government would go on to lower the voting age to 18 and begin designing a national health service — Medibank. Free higher education, the introduction of no fault divorce, the establishment of legal aid and the abolition of the death penalty were other reforms the Whitlam government successfully implemented.

Unfortunately for Labor they had been elected at the exact moment that the postwar boom was beginning to turn. The 1973 Oil Shock sent an inflationary spike through the world economy and drastically increased commodity prices. The Liberal party jumped at the chance to accuse Labor of crashing the Australian economy.

During this economic crisis, which led to three recessions in two years, the Labor government was desperate to find a way of mitigating overseas capital flight which had begun as soon as they were elected. They needed to slow unemployment and curb inflation. But some of their solutions only caused further problems, at least for their political survival.

Gough's deputy in 1975, Jim Cairns, worked with the minister for resources and energy Rex Connor on a scheme to buy back Australia's entire resource sector. The government knew that the loan council, which was overseen by the state premiers, would never approve of borrowing money for nationalising industry. So they had to look for loans in secret. Connor was in contact with Tirath Khemlani, a Pakistani banker who claimed he could provide a USD 4 billion loan to the government. Soon Whitlam ordered Connor to break all contact with Khemlani.

However the Liberals already had enough information to build a scandal for the media. They obtained a transcript of telex conversations between Connor and Khemlani and accused the government of corruption and incompetence.

Using this as a justification, the Liberals refused to vote on the appropriation bill. This meant the government would run out of money. The L-NCP demanded an election be called. However Whitlam would only support a half senate election, hoping it would provide him with a majority. John Kerr refused to allow the election. So the government was jammed.

Contributing to the crisis was Whitlam's frustration with the Australian intelligence services, and the CIA stationed at Pine Gap, who monitored almost all communications sent through telephone lines. Whitlam believed they had intercepted the Khemlani telex and provided it to the Liberals. Whitlam even named Richard Stallings as a CIA agent with connections to the Opposition on November 2, 1975.

On November 11, after Remembrance day celebrations, Kerr informed Whitlam he was dismissed as Prime Minister. Andrew Theophanous describes the decision in his book Australian Democracy in Crisis:

"A logical consequence of the authoritarian interpretation of the constitution adopted by Kerr is as follows. A Governor General could, by declaring a crisis had arisen, simply dismiss the majority in parliament from government. He could then appoint any minority group in parliament to government. … they could remain as ministers until such a time as the Governor General deems it necessary to have an election." -

Whitlam acquiesced to the decision but the Labor Party attempted to rally the public against the anti-democratic turn. Some union leadership, such as the ACTU President Bob Hawke, attempted to ease the discontent and called for strong support for Labor in the next election. There was no unified response from militant workers. Some strikes happened here and there. Some did not. Probably most people were more concerned with the ongoing effects of inflation and unemployment which were both still increasing.

Whitlam campaigned in the subsequent election on the basis that the entire dismissal was unconstitutional. Theophanous points out the contradictions in this campaigning strategy:

"This was the fundamental logical error in Whitlam's strategy. He accepted the ruling of the system, then condemned it as unconstitutional, then participated in the consequent forced election. Needless to say, this demonstrates his ideological confusion and his ambivalence towards the ruling class. He had played by the rules of the system, believing that his opponents would put the interests of democracy over and above their class interests."

The Labor Party has been traumatised by this event ever since. The lesson they learnt from the 70s was that to remain in power, they could not meaningfully challenge international capital, intelligence apparatuses, and the Opposition. Yet Gough Whitlam was also a victim of his own success. He ascended just at the time that the political order he had come to take for granted, namely the postwar economic boom, was coming to an end.

In many ways a comparison can be made between him and Anthony Albanese, who while nowhere near as charismatic, does represent the epitome of a neoliberal progressive, thrust into power just as the neoliberal order reveals itself to have evaporated in the electrical fire of quantitative easing and Trumpian tech-oligarchy. The world is changing just as it was in the 70s. What comes next is hard to predict.

What is Australian Republicanism?

Gough Whitlam's government made an admirable attempt to reform Australian society. Unfortunately they underestimated the scale of resistance they would face. Even given the circumstance of the present constitution, they only had a slim majority for the duration of their time in office, their mandate was not decisive enough.

Democracy and the Australian constitution are totally negotiable for the capitalist class. Profits and minimal government intervention in private production are not. The 1975 dismissal showed that even mild reform can be rebuffed. Truly revolutionary change will require the establishment of a new democratic republic.

The monarchy must be repudiated and cast away from the politics of this continent. A new legislative assembly that can properly represent the interests of the working class would need to be formed.

No president or cabinet would be necessary. The MP's would be instantly recallable and elected on a mandate to vote for the specific interests of their region, community or particular industry. Elections would be annual and the voting age would be lowered to 15.

This would have to be a first step towards meaningful political reform, let alone socialist revolution. This should be obvious for socialist organisers in this country but unfortunately some still believe that the road to socialism can come out of the current parliamentary system, or alternatively some kind of direct challenge to the capitalist state as it is currently constituted.

These two strategies should not be posed in opposition to each other. Nor should they be considered sufficient for the actual task we have set ourselves as communists. This state, and all of its anti-democratic features must be smashed. Yet at the same time, a mass party that can engage in elections will be necessary to build the kind of political expertise required to establish a new republic.

The central question is how to mobilise the majority of working people in this country. We need popular support or else we will be crushed. Neither spontaneous outbursts of revolutionary fervour, nor tepid electoralism will be up to the task. Before we can build a democratic socialist republic we must support the development of working-class civil institutions in Australia. These institutions are not just social, they are political.

Communists should contribute to the redevelopment of working-class social centres, free art, music, sports and recreational events, libraries and working spaces. These will be the third precondition for a socially coherent and politically aware working class that can defend its own political majority from the forces of reactionary capitalist domination.

Our movement, if it ever develops to a mass scale, will need diverse strategies for disseminating political propaganda. Whitlam was at the mercy of the Australian corporate media, and also forced to navigate complicated parliamentary bureaucracy in such a way that he was easily portrayed as corruptible and chaotic. If we intend to win, we will need a movement and political party that is far less naive than the Labor Party was and continues to be. The Labor Party are loyal to this colonial state. We are aiming to be revolutionaries.

Down with the monarchy!

The powers of the crown were used to remove a government, and they can be used again. The monarchy must be abolished. Communists and socialists will need to be united and prepared for a future that is increasingly unstable. Our political success will be measured by the level of independence the working class of this region of the world can realise.

The dismissal still influences today's electoral politics. The modern Labor and Liberal parties were moulded by this event. No one in politics has forgotten it, and the spectre of another constitutional crisis hangs over the Australian government at times. Scott Morrison used similarly anti-democratic tactics against his own party in 2018 — by refusing to recall parliament, he avoided a leadership spill until he was able to hold an election.

The tragedy for Gough Whitlam in particular was that he wasn't able to adapt to a paradigm shift in the economic order. He tried to, but his attempts were thwarted by the rapidly changing nature of the times. The economy did not stabilise under Fraser and remained volatile until the mid-80s. But nevertheless, Whitlam was easily blamed for tectonic shifts in the global economic system.

We may be faced with even more difficult economic realities. This is why our program of a radically democratic workers republic is a necessary first step in the struggle for communism.

Gough Whitlam and David Smith on the steps of parliament house, November 1975

Social Patriotism & the Australian Left

Volodymyr Zelenskyy (centre), President of Ukraine, photographed in 2024.

The Australian Left, like the Left across the world, has been split over the issue of the war in Ukraine. ***Revmira*** *writes on how much of the Australian Left, in taking a defencist position defending Ukraine and the EU/NATO, are taking a social patriotist position.*

The recent slap-fight between Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelensky has widely been seen as a watershed moment in world politics. It has also turned the focus of the non-British Anglophone left temporarily back to Ukraine and the slaughterhouse that the Russo-American rivalry has transformed it into. Across the left the myriad fields of part-time internationalists have suddenly remembered that Ukraine exists, and many newspaper articles have appeared outlining the varied positions held by the wonderful world of the sects.

In Australia, Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance, the Freedom Socialist Party, and the theoretical local branch of the Alliance for Western Loyalism (or as they are formally known - the Alliance for Workers' Liberty) have all declared their support for the Ukrainian state to some degree or another. Their positioning of the war as one of national liberation against Russian Imperialism has resulted in the common refrain of 'From Ukraine to Palestine, Occupation is a Crime'. This is a position which involves the remarkably fascinating alternating ability to both denounce the production of Australian military weaponry when directed to Israel and yet proclaim undying support when that exact same production is directed to the fields of Ukraine.

This social patriotism is hardly a new development on either the Australian or international left. Afterall, the collapse of the Second International was based upon the total dissolution of all parties (save the Russian and Serbian) into vulgar nationalism, and a rabid defence of 'their' state against the 'undemocratic barbarism' of the opposition. Now of course there is a difference between the betrayal of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière (SFIO), and the Labour Party, and the myriads of minor sects giving their support to the interests of the Australian state today. The SPD was a mass party with influence over the vast majority of the German proletariat — these charming sects are not.

Presently, most of the social patriotism in the Ukraine conflict isn't as blatant as some of the worst historical examples (the AWL aside). The general line expressed is continued support of Australian military shipments and logistical support to Ukraine and running implicit political defence for the Ukrainian regime. Nonetheless, this is a fundamental failure of the socialist movement. It is a rejection of perhaps the most important pillar of Communism during the long road to workers' power, total and unrelenting state disloyalty. The interests of the bourgeois state and the international Proletariat are at fundamental loggerheads — this is a basic tenet of Marxism.

To declare the old Trotskyist adage of 'military but not political support' is to give into inane sterile dogma, because fundamentally there is a clear and total inability of socialist forces to intervene on a military basis, and the role that these political parties are playing is fundamentally political. There are no international brigades fighting their way across the fields of the Donbass. The choice is either support to our imperialist block, the opposing imperialist block, or the revolutionary choice of declaring for neither side and fighting for workers' revolution.

Opportunism will always require more justification than simply defending the principles and positions of world revolution that the Communist movement defends and upholds. Ukraine is simply the most recent example. Social patriotism, or sometimes outright social imperialism has a long and proud history on the Australian left, be it under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, Trotskyism, post-Trotskyism. Many a time, the Australian left has given into its worst impulses and declared their support for the interests of an imperialist state, and indeed quite often for the interests of our imperialist state.

A crucial example of this historically is the actions of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) during the East Timor Genocide in the 1990's. Their theoretical and political history of uncritical support to national liberation movements and a general tactic of tailing nationalism led to them raising the demand 'the Democratic Socialist Party calls on all supporters of democracy to mobilise to demand that the Australian government insist that the United Nations authorise the immediate dispatch of Australian troops to East Timor' — a position which they took even when in that same statement they degenerate into active support for Australian imperialism by declaring that, 'if the United Nations Security Council continues to argue that an international military force cannot be sent to East Timor without the Indonesian government's agreement, then the Australian government should act unilaterally and send its armed forces into East Timor'.

The historical record of Australian intervention and imperialist exploitation into East Timor has quite demonstrably proven the failure of the DSP's line that Australian Imperialism would be a lesser evil. While perhaps the frying pan is less murderous than the fire, the exploitation remains the same. The DSP's active support and organisation of rallies where the predominant chant (in a deeply ironic twist of history) was 'Troops in' can be seen as nothing less than treason. The interests of the working class and Australian imperialism did not briefly see some sort of temporal convergence which justified a temporary liquidation of state loyalism.

Just as in East Timor, we see in Ukraine that opportunism and defence for imperialism has seeped in through the defence of democratic politics and concessions to moralism over and despite the principled communist positions held by the movement. Although, the opportunist taint has been well established within Socialist Alternative for many decades. The political tradition from which they descended was founded due to Tony Cliff refusing to take a side in the Korean War, in yet another demonstration of his at least superficial similarity to the scattered 'Ultra-left' tradition. Yet rather than taking on a line of dual revolutionary defeatism, the cry of 'Neither Washington nor Moscow' evolved into 'Well Washington is a bit better than Moscow' — a line which spread out to the myriads of sects clinging to the ideological teat of Tony Cliff and his Socialist Workers Party.

In 1980, when the Soviet Army entered Afghanistan to secure their crumbling puppet state, the International Socialist Tendency declared their opposition to the intervention and their political support to the Mujaheddin in the struggle against what they considered to be Soviet imperialism. By declaring political support for the forces struggling against the Soviet Union, Australian socialists declared their support for the capitalist and imperialist positions of their own state. Australia and America both actively benefited from the Soviet military intervention and eventual defeat in Afghanistan.

This political tendency is perhaps the natural outgrowth of the anti-imperialist ditch that socialist politics parked in during the 1960's and has yet to climb out of. The near entirety of the left is banking upon the hope that another mass-radicalisation event in the tradition of the Vietnam War will emerge, allowing for a short cut direct to the masses.

This leads to nothing more than constant twists and turns, a declaration that nationalism is bad one day, and then uncritical support to nationalism the next. The works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky get twisted and warped so much that they lose all original meaning and until all that matters is the sect line.

It is the task of genuine communists to fight against this distortion of theoretical and programmatical positions. To fight unerringly against the interests of whatever state we exist within be it Australia, the United States, the People's Republic of China, Ukraine, or Russia. The interests of the proletariat and the capitalist class never overlap, and it is vital that we never give into the capitalist myth that they do. Comrades should bear in mind the memories of the Zimmerwald Left. The slogan we must unerringly defend is simple: no war but the class war.

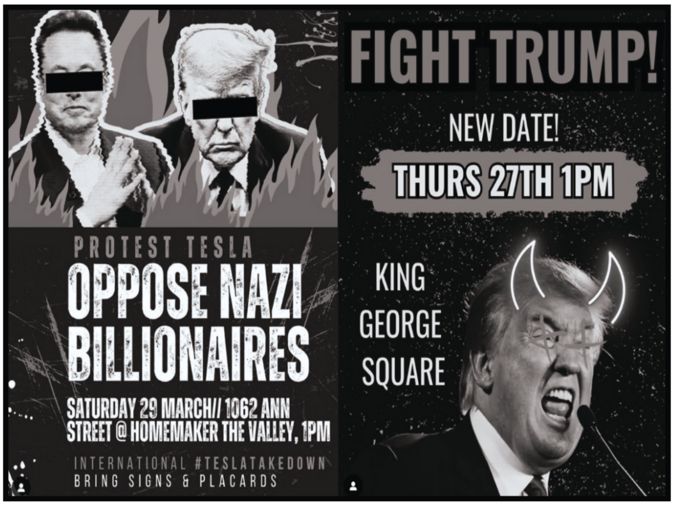
Socialist Alternative’s Tesla Takedown

Socialist Alternative has launched a new campaign targeting "Nazi billionaires" like Elon Musk. **Sylvia Ruhl** *writes about SAlt's antifascist campaigns and how their campaign against Tesla is tailing Democrat Party style liberal activism.*

Socialist Alternative (and the left more broadly), has over the last few months oriented towards campaigning against a nebulously-defined “far-right”. The main individuals at the centre of this campaign are recently re-elected US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk, who has been put in charge of the newly-anointed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), an initiative tasked with purging opposition to the Trumpist political program from the state. Australian Opposition Leader Peter Dutton, despite the impending election which could see him elected as Prime Minister, receives less attention from these campaigns. The successes of the far-right in Europe and the misogyny of young men are also highlighted, but only for the purpose of endlessly repeating statistics on these topics.

This latest wave of anti-fascist activism is, put simply, not socialist at all. It is liberal tailism. The content of this politics focuses almost entirely on Elon Musk’s latest racist stunts, and the immediate impacts of policies enacted by the Trump administration, with vague reference to the possible ideological motivations behind them. It is a politics no different than what one would hear from most liberal public figures, save for a “radical” facade barely maintained by making sure to mention the need to also fight capitalism.

That is to say, comrades will talk about how “bad” it is that this or that executive order was signed by Trump, or how “shameful” it is that the US now has a hard-right government that actively associates itself with Musk. No effort is taken to understand, or explain the class forces at play here or in the US, and protest after protest is called to hit the streets to simply “fight Trump” and “Oppose Nazi Billionaires”, without ever specifying what it actually means to do this in Australia (or even why we should bother with such vaguely-defined “fighting”).



This orientation is epitomised by the content approved and published by Red Flag, with a recent article calling for an “international anti-fascist campaign against Tesla”, which by the content of the article appears to mostly be a call to protest outside Tesla dealerships. The author even outright calls the decentralised “Tesla takedown” protest movement in the US a “positive development”. In the days following this article being published, the Brisbane branch of SAlt have even begun to officially organise a protest outside a local Tesla showroom on exactly this basis! What demands are being put forward by SAlt as part of this “Tesla Takedown” campaign? What role can it play in eventually bringing the working class to power? The answer to these questions are “none” and “it can’t”. The “official” website for this latest campaign that SAlt are currently tailing simply calls for the following actions: “Take action at Tesla showrooms everywhere”, “Sell your Tesla's”, “Dump your stock”, “Stop Musk Now” [see: taketesladown.com]. This is a doomed attempt at a consumer boycott, and it has nothing to do with socialist politics. We need to fight together to strengthen working class organising and political education, not follow liberals on moralistic tantrums.

Another piece from the recent deluge of articles on the “far-right” by Red Flag was one strangely titled Resisting the right-wing vibe shift. The article discussed the Silicon Valley billionaires’ newfound support for Trump, explaining this realignment as follows: “Diversity, equity and inclusion programs fitted the vibe of the 2010s and early 2020s, when millions of people mobilised to demand racial justice and the #MeToo movement excoriated misogynistic corporate culture. Companies adapted to try to maintain relevance amongst their consumer base. But that moment has passed, and the naked pursuit of profit and power, the preferred state of affairs for the billionaires, is making a comeback." Marxists do not attempt to understand the world by assessing changes in the "vibe" of society over time, we do so by examining the class forces at play, and this allows us to understand why certain sections of capital back the politics they do.

It is true that a significant and now larger tendency of tech capital, now referred to as the "tech-right", has given their backing to the Trump administration and the MAGA movement. We cannot understand this as Musk, Zuckerberg, Bezos and others simply becoming reactionary as part of the zeitgeist and leave it at that. The industrial capitalist class have long opposed workers organising, and sought to bring them under discipline and control in order to maximise profits.

This has been a core part of modern digital computing since its earliest days, with the original tools on which computing was based being envisioned by codesigner Charles Babbage as tools for the automation and discipline of labour. Babbage's famous volume, On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures, published one year before the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, included discussion of methods of labour division and surveillance that have roots on the Empire's plantations.

The methods of labour discipline pioneered in industrial Britain have continued through to the present day, and the development of new technologies by the tech industry, including "Artificial Intelligence" (really just energy-intensive pattern recognition programs) is done explicitly to innovate in the surveillance of workers, whether that be at the workplace or at the nation's borders. In doing so it helps to preserve the relations of exploitation. Babbage himself saw democracy and capitalism as being incompatible, and there is a clear line in the ideology of Silicon Valley from their earlier progenitors; not long ago largely the remit of Peter Thiel and his followers. The shift of the C-suite to the tech-right can be seen as part of this return to an explicitly anti-democratic worldview.

It is clear that the eugenicist tech-right ideology, whilst new in its all-but-open acceptance by CEO's, is not at all new within Silicon Valley. Regardless, even if it was, our task as communists and radical workers is not to campaign against the most anti-democratic figureheads of the ruling classes. It is to fight capital, and to bring the working class to power. Defeating the tech-right can only be completed if the working class expropriates the sprawling technological apparatuses and bring them under democratic control, repurposing their management for the collective and ecological good. Through this (and not through futile calls for a "Tesla Takedown") will they finally be relegated to the dustbin of history.

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Partisan produces high-quality, independent communist journalism and analysis.

We report on the Left and the workers movement in Australia, providing a platform for radicals and militants.

We advocate openly for communist unity and regroupment under a shared Marxist program.

Lenin: In Australia

*After a general election which smashed Fisher's Labor government in 1913, **Vladimir Lenin** writes on the peculiar situation of Australian capitalism and the working class leadership in the Labor Party.*

A general election recently took place in Australia. The Labour Party, which had a majority in the Lower House—44 seats out of 75—was defeated. It now has only 36 seats out of 75. The majority has passed to the Liberals, but this majority is a very unstable one, because 30 of the 36 seats in the Upper House are held by Labour.

What sort of peculiar capitalist country is this, in which the workers' representatives, predominate in the Upper house and, till recently, did so in the Lower House as well, and yet the capitalist system is in no danger?

An English correspondent of the German labour press recently explained the situation, which is very often misrepresented by bourgeois writers.

The Australian Labour Party does not even call itself a socialist party. Actually it is a liberal-bourgeois party, while the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives.

This strange and incorrect use of terms in naming par ties is not unique. In America, for example, the slave-owners of yesterday are called Democrats, and in France, enemies of socialism, petty bourgeois, are called Radical Socialists! In order to understand the real significance of parties, one must examine not their signboards but their class character and the historical conditions of each individual country.

Australia is a young British colony. Capitalism in Australia is still quite youthful. The country is only just taking shape as an independent state. The workers are for the most part emigrants from Britain. They left the country at the time when the liberal-labour policy held almost undivided sway there, when the masses of the British workers were Liberals. Even now the majority of the skilled factory workers in Britain are Liberals or semi-Liberals. This is the results of the exceptionally favourable, monopolist position enjoyed by Britain in the second half of the last century. Only now are the masses of the workers in Britain turning (but turning slowly) towards socialism.

Andrew Fisher (centre), Lady Denman (centre right) and King O'Malley (right) at the Canberra naming ceremony, 1913.

And while in Britain the so-called Labour Party is an alliance between the non-socialist trade unions and the extremely opportunist Independent Labour Party, in Australia the Labour Party is the unalloyed representative of the non-socialist workers' trade unions.

The leaders of the Australian Labour Party are trade union officials, everywhere the most moderate and "capital serving" element, and in Australia, altogether peaceable, purely liberal.

The ties binding the separate states into a united Australia are still very weak. The Labour Party has had to concern itself with developing and strengthening these ties, and with establishing central government.

In Australia the Labour Party has done what in other countries was done by the Liberals, namely, introduced a uniform tariff for the whole country, a uniform educational law, a uniform land tax and uniform factory legislation.

Naturally, when Australia is finally developed and consolidated as an independent capitalist state, the condition of the workers will change, as also will the liberal Labour Party, which will make way for a socialist workers' party. Australia is an illustration of the conditions under which exceptions to the rule are possible. The rule is: a socialist workers' party in a capitalist country. The exception is: a liberal Labour Party which arises only for a short time by virtue of specific conditions that are abnormal for capitalism in general.

Those Liberals in Europe and in Russia who try to "teach" the people that class struggle is unnecessary by citing the example of Australia, only deceive themselves and others. It is ridiculous to think of transplanting Australian conditions (an undeveloped, young colony, populated by liberal British workers) to countries where the state is long established and capitalism well developed.

ALP is bosses’ party; are Greens an alternative?

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Bob Brown (centre right) at a climate change rally, 2008.

*Writing in 2008, **Lina Waldron** (Revolutionary Socialist Party) writes about the growth of the Greens Party and whether socialists should consider it a viable alternative to the Labor Party. Originally published in **Direct Action #1 (2008-2013)**.*

The Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) was formed in the mid 2000s from a merger between Direct Action and the Leninist Party Faction, two groups made up of former members of the Democratic Socialist Party. The RSP eventually merged with Socialist Alternative in 2013, with some former RSP members who didn’t join SAlt eventually founding Red Ant (pre-split).

“*What sort of peculiar capitalist country is this, in which the workers’ representatives predominate in the upper house, and until recently did so in the lower house as well, and yet the capitalist system is in no danger?*” Lenin’s 1913 question was prompted by the pro-capitalist politics demonstrated by the 1910-13 Fisher Labor government.

Though socialists helped to found the Australian Labor Party and have always been active within it, and though most of the more politically conscious workers have traditionally given it their support, the ALP has never been a working-class party.

From the beginning, the Labor MP's saw themselves as mediators of the conflict between labour and capital, using legislative reform to harmonise class interests. The ALP’s commitment to the defence of the interests of capital as a whole (the “national interest”), and its political hegemony over the trade unions, have led the capitalist class to view it is an alternative governing party for capital.

Since the early 1980s, the ALP has embraced Thatcherite economic neoliberalism (or “economic rationalism”, as the Laborites prefer to call it). The Hawke and Keating Labor governments of 1983 to 1996 imposed real wage cuts through the ALP-ACTU Prices and Incomes Accord and then “enterprise bargaining”, introduced mandatory detention of “illegal” asylum seekers and fees for tertiary students through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme.

As Labor has shifted further to the right of the capitalist political spectrum, becoming “Another Liberal Party” in much of its policies, electoral space has opened up for minor parties beginning with the Nuclear Disarmament Party in the mid 1980s. Currently this “left-of-Labor” electoral space is occupied by the Australian Greens. Formed in the early 1990s, the Greens’ four policy pillars of ecological sustainability, social and economic justice, peace and non-violence and grassroots democracy.

These progressive-sounding phrases reflect the Greens more detailed platform, which opposes much of the pro-big business, neoliberal policy agenda of the ALP and the conservative Coalition parties.

However, the Greens seek to reform rather than abolish the capitalist political and economic system. They seek a utopian “green”, “peaceful”, “socially just” capitalism that advances the welfare of working-class people and the prosperity of small- and medium-sized business, rather than the super-rich families that dominate life under post-19th century corporate capitalism.

In order to win concessions from the capitalist ruling class on behalf of working people and small business operators, the Greens have to present themselves to the capitalist establishment as potentially “responsible” managers of the private-profit system. For example, Greens leader Senator Bob Brown, told the National Press Club in 2004 that the “Greens economic policies are coherent and environmentally, socially and fiscally responsible”, adding: “The Business Council should look at the Greens stoic insistence on tough budget measures in Tasmania from 1989-92 to see how sensible we are as managers.”

Brown was directing the Business Council, which represents Australia’s 200 biggest corporations, to the use by the Tasmanian Greens of their parliamentary “balance of power” to enter into a formal accord with the state Labor government. The accord specified that the Labor government would protect Tasmania’s forests in return for Greens support for the government’s budget. The outcome of the accord was a state budget that slashed jobs, cut back on public transport and attacked public education.

Despite their claimed commitment to “grassroots democracy”, the Greens do not seek to promote any organisations of grassroots-based rule by the common people. On the contrary, Greens’ leaders believe that parliament is where real decisions are, and should be, made. They therefore concentrate their efforts on trying to achieve parliamentary representation.

Many Greens members also engage in building grassroots movements, but this activity is rarely organised by the Greens as a party. Because they are oriented to reforming the capitalist system through parliamentary legislation, this prevents the Greens from being able to achieve much progress on policies that express their desire to improve the conditions of life of working people.

On May 15, for example, Greens Senator Kerry Nettle moved a motion in solidarity with the Palestinian people on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the brutal establishment of the Israeli colonial settler-state. Predictably, Labor and Coalition senators voted against the motion and it was lost. Without an orientation to building a mass movement of solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, such parliamentary motions do little to help advance the cause of the oppressed.

Any tactical use of parliament by progressives must aim for the higher goal of aiding and consolidating the self-organising capacity of working people, not substituting for it. Alongside exposing the pro-capitalist politics of Labor and the Coalition parties by introducing progressive legislative proposals, parliamentary tactics should seek to expose the structural impediments that the parliamentary system puts in the way of organising the involvement of ordinary people in politics.

Neither perpetual lobbying of the Labor Party for a few progressive concessions, as the social movement peak bodies do, nor playing the preference game and aspiring to hold the balance of power in parliament will save the world’s climate from catastrophic change or result in a more just society.

On the contrary, an important task for a genuinely independent green movement is to expose the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of the parliamentary system and the politicians who live off it. It must concentrate on building the real opposition to pro-capitalist government policies – opposition in workplaces, on campus and in the streets.

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Election 2025: What way for the working class?

Anthony Albanese (Labor, left) and Peter Dutton (Liberal, right). Photo: Lukas Coch/AAP

Australia's federal election has been called for May 3rd, 2025. Every election is a competition for power, though the Left is split on what orientation we should take to them. ***Edith Fischer*** *analyses the electoral parties at play and makes the call to vote socialist.*

Lucky Country's Luck Runs Out

This is a cost of living election, and everyone knows it. Australian workers have been hit hard by rising prices in everything from housing to rents to food on the shelves. Even the middle classes are feeling the bite as their savings are ground down by month on month price rises and skyrocketing housing costs.

Despite the Albanese government claiming victory over inflation, prices have not fallen - year on year inflation continues, while wages systematically fail to catch up. Last year, workers took a 6% pay cut. After decades of relative economic stability brought on by a long mineral boom, the 'Lucky Country's' luck has seemingly run out.

As Australian workers count their cents and line up at food banks, the major parties of Australian capitalism prepare to parade their programs in front of the masses. All in all, it is a weak showing. Australian politics is not an energetic game, and it rests on swinging a relatively small layer of swing voters in key seats rather than winning mass support behind popular programs.

The sluggishness and lack of creativity in the political arena mirrors the sluggishness of the broader economic conditions, and the deep unease that now permeates Australia's political and cultural life. It also mirrors the fundamental problem that faces Australian capitalism: nobody has a plan or a mandate to address the ongoing problems of capital accumulation.

Labor: Capital's Workers Party

The Albanese government came to government on an ambitious neoliberal platform: a new accord on jobs and skills would lift productivity and raise wages, while the government would work to address domestic violence, the housing crisis, living costs, and integrating indigenous Australians into the state through the Voice to Parliament referendum. In many ways, Albanese's government sought to revive the flagging spirit of Keatingism - a neoliberal program to overcome social inequality and poverty through rising living standards and market reforms. In this he has not been successful.

The Albanese government has been a farce. The flagship economic program of the government has failed to materialise, while they have presided over attacks on the CFMEU that are broadly unpopular amongst trade union members. The failure of the Voice to Parliament referendum put dampers on any serious consideration of social reform, and left the Albanese government with two policies, both inherited from the Coalition government of Scott Morrison - the controversial AUKUS military alliance and the Stage-3 Tax Cuts.

Now, with the United States imposing tariffs on Australian goods, and Canada and Europe both raising their doubts about the long-term stability of the US-NATO axis, the AUKUS agreement is looking more and more shaky - not to mention the fact that we may never get those submarines. Meanwhile, extensive tax cuts have only harmed the attempt to suppress inflation by increasing the money supply, and kept interest rates higher for longer. All of this is in the context of what many economists are predicting is an imminent global recession emanating from the United States.

Workers cannot put any faith in the manager's of the capitalist system. While the

VICTORIAN SOCIALISTS
VICTORIAN SOCIALISTS
Jordan van den Lamb
for Senate

Victorian Socialists members and volunteers, with Jordan van den Lamb (centre). Photo: Victorian Socialists FB.

Labor Party is indeed rooted in the trade unions, it remains a bourgeois party in program. It is for this reason that V.I. Lenin labelled them a “bourgeois-liberal workers party” - an analysis that remains salient to this day. Even if the party claims to stand up for “ordinary Australians” and represent the interests of the working class, they only represent the interests of trade union bureaucrats, super-fund managers, and executives in the public service - that is, the apparatus that connects workers to the state.

The Greens: Progressive Fantasies and Middle Class Delusions

Many in the socialist movement, especially amongst young people, see their struggles bound up with the electoral fortunes of the progressive Australian Greens. Primarily rooted in the progressive middle class (mainly urban, well educated, and professional) and reform-minded intellectuals, the Greens have an appeal to many workers. At best, they serve as a reformist wing of the Labor Party, attempting to influence Labor policy from outside of its ranks. At worst, it is a clearing house for Quaker moralism, middle class fantasies, and progressive delusions.

The Greens policy is a grab-bag of social reforms which appeal to many progressives and workers. However, the question of how to achieve any of these reforms, outside of voting for the Greens, is left entirely unanswered. Some of these reforms are positive, and would benefit workers. Others, such as a massive program of housing development, are simply utopian in the context of the advanced capitalist crisis.

Still others are objectively reactionary - breaking up large firms and promoting small business is an objectively reactionary demand that breaks these capitalist firms into smaller, less efficient pieces. In their popular messaging about expanding medicare and building public housing, the Greens capture a lot of progressive and even socialist sentiment. What they do not talk about at all is the question of democracy, and workers power. The Green party will offer the youth of this country everything except political power. We reply that everything is illusory except power.

What Way for the Working Class?

How should workers proceed? There is no party in Australia today that can offer a working class, socialist program at the national level. The Labor Party is the party of the trade union movement, but it has a liberal-bourgeois political program to manage capitalist society. The Greens, despite utopian rhetoric, are a party of middle class reformers. The socialist movement, without a party of its own, can only offer its program in a handful of seats. Absent a unified workers party with a socialist program, the working class will have no unified voice in political life, and no chance of cohereing itself as a political force.

Instead the socialist forces are divided. Socialists run on two separate tickets - Socialist Alliance and Victorian Socialists. These two platforms are nearly indistinguishable, and the sectarian differences that divide the movement are totally inscrutable to the working class - especially when these differences are not elaborated upon. It is not clear even to many socialists what reasons Socialist Alliance and Victorian Socialists have for running on separate and distinct platforms! Of course we want workers to vote socialist - but the socialists need to take themselves seriously to earn workers votes!

The platforms themselves totally elude the key questions. A heap of economic and social reforms are offered, but the key questions - the democratic republic, the establishment of a popular militia, the abolition of the standing army and police, and the expropriation of the commanding heights of the economy - are left unresolved. Practically, these platforms are not necessarily more radical than that of the Greens - albeit one has the word “socialist” plastered above it.

In the socialist and workers movement, it is vital that we fight for a communist platform in these elections. To the Labor Party, in the Greens, in the socialist sects and electoral fronts, we need to fight for a working class minimum-maximum program - a democratic republic and socialism. At a minimum, it must include the following:

- A fully democratic republic which abolishes senatorial power, monarchism, and the presidential system.
- Abolition of the standing army.
- A Treaty with First Nations.
- An end to AUKUS and ANZUS.
- The abolition of the Fair Work Act and the opposition to state intervention in the trade unions.
- An emergency program of renewable energy without job losses.
- A massive expansion of government housing and fixing of rents.
- Fixing of prices for groceries and the establishment of state and cooperative grocery stores.
- Nationalisation of banking and utilities.
- A living minimum wage, with benefits set at the minimum wage.

Ultimately, elections will continue to be a barren ground for workers while we lack a party of our own. The working class needs a party, one that offers a working class program of democracy and socialism. This can only be achieved through the reforging of the Communist Party in Australia. Then, and only then, can the working class conquer politics, and win the battle for democracy.

Vote Socialist! Fight to Reforge the Communist Party in Australia!

Freedom of the Press & the Working Class

Writing in 1938 while in exile, ***Leon Trotsky*** *polemicises against moves by the liberals of Mexico to enact censorship laws against the reactionary press, correctly pointing out that these laws can and will be used against the working class.*

A campaign against the reactionary press is developing in Mexico. The campaign is directed by the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) leaders or, more precisely, by Mr. Lombardo Toledano personally. The object is to “curb” reactionary press, either by submitting it to censorship, or by banning it completely. The trade unions have entered the path of war. Decidedly incurable democrats, corrupted by their experiences with a completely Stalinised Moscow, headed by “friends” of the GPU, have greeted this campaign, which can only be described as suicidal. In fact it is not difficult to see that, even if this campaign would triumph and bring concrete results to the liking of Lombardo Toledano, the ultimate consequences will fall back on the working class.

Theory, as well as historic experience, testify that any restriction to democracy in bourgeois society, is eventually directed against the proletariat, just as taxes eventually fall on the shoulders of the proletariat. Bourgeois democracy is usable by the proletariat only insofar as it opens the way for the development of the class struggle. Consequently, any workers “leader” who arms the bourgeois state with special means to control public opinion in general, and the press in particular, is a traitor. In the last analysis, the accentuation of class struggle will force bourgeois of all shades, to conclude a pact: to accept special legislation, and every kind of restrictive measures, and measures of “democratic” censorship against the working class. Those who have not yet realised this, should leave the ranks of the working class.

“But sometimes” – will object certain “friends” of the Soviet Union – “the dictatorship of the proletariat is obliged to resort to exceptional measures, especially against the reactionary press”

To this we reply: First, this objection equates a workers’ state with a bourgeois state. Although Mexico is a semi-colonial country, it is at the same time a bourgeois state, definitely not a workers’ state. But even from the point of view of the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the interdiction or censorship of bourgeois papers is not at all a matter of “program” or “principle", nor an ideal situation.

Once victorious, the proletariat may find itself forced, for a period of time, to take special measures against the bourgeoisie, if the bourgeoisie adopts an attitude of open revolt against the workers’ state. In this case, restrictions to the freedom of the press go hand in hand with all other measures used in preparation for a civil war. When forced to use artillery and aviation against the enemy we will obviously not tolerate this same enemy maintaining his own centres of information and propaganda inside the camp of the armed proletariat. Nevertheless, even in this case, if exceptional measures are prolonged long enough to create a permanent situation, then they carry the danger of going out of control and, giving a political monopoly to the workers' bureaucracy, becoming a source of its degeneration.

We have before us a living example of such a dynamic, with the hated suppression of the freedom of expression and of the press in the Soviet Union. And this has nothing to do with the interests of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary, it helps protect the interests of the new caste in power against the attacks of the workers' and peasants' opposition. This highly bonapartist Moscow bureaucracy is currently aped by Messrs. Lombardo Toledano and co. who confuse their personal careers with the interests of socialism.

The real tasks of the workers' state do not consist in policing public opinion, but in freeing it from the yoke of capital. This can only be done by placing the means of production – which includes the production of information – in the hands of society in its entirety. Once this essential step towards socialism has been taken, all currents of opinion which have not taken arms against the dictatorship of the proletariat must be able to express themselves freely. It is the duty of the workers' state to put in their hands, to all according to their numeric importance, the technical means necessary for this, printing presses, paper, means of transportation. One of the principal causes of the degeneration of the state machine is the monopolisation of the press by the Stalinist bureaucracy which risks to transform all the gains of the October revolution to a pile of ruins.

If we had to search for examples of the nefarious influence of the Comintern on workers' movements of various countries, the actual campaign led by Lombardo Toledano would furnish one of the worst. Essentially, Toledano and his doctrinary companions try to introduce into a bourgeois democratic system methods and means which, under certain circumstances, might be inevitable under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover, they don't in fact borrow these methods from the dictatorship of the proletariat, but from its Bonapartist usurpers. In other words, they infect an already sick bourgeois democracy with the virus of the decadent bureaucracy.

The anaemic democracy of Mexico is facing a constant, mortal, daily danger from two directions: First from the foreign imperialism and, second, from the agents of reaction in the interior of the country, who control the high volume publications. But only those blind or simpleminded could think that the workers and peasants could be freed from reactionary ideas by the banning of reactionary press. In fact, it is only the greatest freedom of expression that can create favourable conditions for the advance of the revolutionary movement in the working class.

It is essential to wage an unrelenting battle against the reactionary press. But the workers cannot leave a task they have to fulfil themselves through their own organisations and their own press, to the repressive fist of the bourgeois state. Today the government may seem well disposed towards workers' organisations. Tomorrow it may fall, and it inevitably will, into the hands of the most reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie. In this case the existing repressive laws will be used against the workers. Only adventurists who think of nothing but the moment's needs can fail to guard themselves against such a danger.

The most efficient way to fight the bourgeois press is for the workers' press to develop. Of course, yellow papers like El Popular, are unable to undertake such a task. Such papers have no place among the workers' press, the revolutionary press, or even the bourgeois press of good reputation. El Popular serves the personal ambitions of Mr. Toledano, who himself is in fact in the service of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Its methods: lies, calumnies, witch hunts, are methods à la Toledano. His paper has neither program nor ideas. It is evident that such a sheet can never strike a resonant chord in the working class, nor win them over from the bourgeois press.

So we arrive at the inevitable conclusion that the struggle between the bourgeois press starts with the eviction of the degenerate leaders from workers' organisations and in particular from the liberation of the workers' press from the tutelage of Toledano and other bourgeois careerists. The Mexican proletariat needs a honest press to express its needs, defend its interests, broaden its horizon and pave the way for the socialist revolution in Mexico. This is what Clave intends to do. So, we start by declaring an unrelenting war against the Bonapartist pretensions of Toledano. In this effort, we hope for the support of all advanced workers, as well as Marxists and authentic democrats.

Letters

Stop Killing Women – But how?

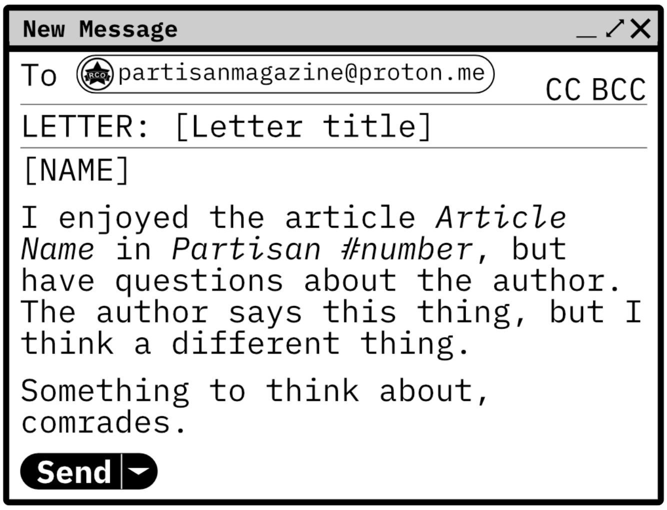
ANTHONY FURIA, MELBOURNE

The "Stop Killing Women" anti-femicide rally held by the Red Heart Campaign here in Melbourne on the 15th of March was politically abysmal. I have personally made similar critiques of certain Palestinian solidarity marches, but this rally (if it can be called that) was in actuality the outpouring of mass amounts of grief and misery by those who had lost family and friends to direct male violence. Not that such displays are devoid of utility, or wholly unimportant, but a political rally that makes its tagline "stop killing women" should, perhaps, have a coherent proposal to do so.

Instead, speakers (those mourning their loved ones) were provided the opportunity to present varying (frequently conflicting) proposals and demands, all of which were inadequate and some of which were straightforwardly dangerous. Multiple speakers proposed mandatory life sentencing for murder charges, some advocated for mandatory ankle bracelets for all subjects of AVOs, and one speaker had the gall to call for the introduction of coercive control laws, already used in New South Wales to further discriminate against and separate Indigenous families. These appeals, in addition to being utterly politically compromising, also reflect the passivity of the protests themselves – with appeals levelled against the state to 'act' to protect women, and a total disregard for the need for women's self-organisation; to organise women as revolutionary subjects, not objects of policy.

The total lack of political coherence was particularly jarring considering the content and nature of the rally itself. Attendees were exposed to some of the most naked forms of patriarchal brutality and violence – to graphic examples of the unbarred violence which enforces social reproduction and kills women and children en masse – and provided with no solution whatsoever. The family form was not mentioned once as a cause and product of this violence, nor was the systematic subordination of women in social reproduction touched on once, in any form, through any language.

Politics was abstracted, left to the 'lived experience' of individuals, who produced sclerotic, anger-motivated programs which would do more to alleviate their personal sense of injustice than uproot the totalising social structure responsible for the deaths of countless women.



To partisanmagazine@proton.me

LETTER: [Letter title]

[NAME]

I enjoyed the article *Article Name* in *Partisan #number*, but have questions about the author. The author says this thing, but I think a different thing.

Something to think about, comrades.

Any movement for women's liberation must be a communist one – but beyond that, it must be political. It must engage women as political subjects, not enforce their status as objects of hatred. Women deserve, and indeed need, far better than a dead-end movement whose intention is to memorialise grief and commemorate tragedy. Women deserve a future, not an endless reflection on the total suffering and individual outbursts of total violence.

Build a communist women's movement! But how?

PORCO, SYDNEY

A recent letter ["*Stop Killing Women - But how?*" By Anthony Furia] published in Partisan lamented the reformist character of the 'stop killing women!' protests. This letter characterised the demands of the protest as fundamentally "passive," and lacking "political coherence".

This is true. However, this letter neglected to recognise that this critique applies to most Marxist sects. It is a reality that most activism in Australia amounts to shallow calls for reform; even socialist organisations succumb to this.

My experience of the protest I attended in Sydney was that there was a sincere urge to move away from "NGO" and "Influencer" feminism. These protests happened in fourteen cities around the country. This is an incredibly heartening accomplishment which got no mention in the letter, no indication that this movement had any room to grow or any politics worth engaging with at all.

A slightly less distasteful piece in Partisan from earlier last week: We need a communist women's movement argued that "the misleadership of the women's movement has meant that the vast masses of working women have not been politicised or drawn into revolutionary activity." This is also true.

Truth doesn't matter as much as we would like. At least truth separate from the political organisation of the working class.

It may be true that communist revolution is the historical destiny of the working class. It may also be true that capitalist civilisation has and will continue to develop the conditions for this proletarian takeover. But from a practical point of view, what do these articles provide?

The initial letter I'm responding to falls into one style of Marxist writing I will call finger wagging.

In its best form finger wagging serves as a critical clarification of the divisions between political tendencies. Think Lenin discussing anarchists in state and revolution, or Marx discussing utopian socialists in the communist manifesto. In its worst form, finger wagging becomes a belittling and self congratulatory exercise. Essentially finger wagging is a form of scolding another political organisation, tendency or individual for not correctly "understanding" the present political situation. This article itself is a form of finger wagging.

This writing inevitably signals towards a tradition and a historical period that has evaporated. Marx and Lenin were writing finger wagging pieces in response to very real political tendencies that existed alongside and in discussion with their own. How much discussion have grassroots feminist organisations had with the RCO at all?

If the lack of political coherence, and the passive, abstracted politics of the developing anti-femicide rallies must be critiqued as not "communist enough," we must then be ready to critique ourselves for not being appealing enough. Which brings me back to the idea of the necessity of a women's revolution. It must happen. But how?

What I saw at the rally I attended was an authentic expression of how many "women" feel in this country. Scared, beaten down, demobilised, alienated from their male partners or friends and uncertain about their safety, their jobs or their future.

The currently abstract ideal of a proletarian revolution does not provide certainty to any of these individual women. This protest did for a brief moment. It was a certainty in a shared struggle. One which I think we must radically support rather than critique before it even develops.

Which leads me back to the other article. Calling for a communist women's movement is necessary. However the article suffers from the other Marxist tendency that I call shouting from the rafters.

Shouting from the rafters often sounds very concrete, and very clear. At the right moment, in the correct context with enough primed ears, it can be a match that lights the flame of proletarian political fervour and revolutionary action.

Yet it suffers from the same problem as the boy who cried wolf. People find demands to be empty and abstract when they are simply repeated year after year in newspaper after newspaper. I believe that the socialist left uses this style to hone its rhetorical verbiage and agitational prowess. This is necessary. However, shouting from the rafters reveals our political powerlessness when contrasted with the actual reality of socialist sectarianism. Which is usually characterised by non-socialists as cliquey, aesthetics obsessed and constantly at its own throat. This characterisation is true as well.

Both of these articles attempted to clarify and sharpen something. But they fell flat against the reality of the almost non existent women's movement in this country. A movement which I believe may just be beginning to be built with these anti femicide rallies. I for one do not intend to critique them yet. Rather I intend to show up and support them to grow.

It will be through their grief that these particular women are radicalised. For others it will be for their love of a partner who is killed in a war or a work accident. For some women they will just be radicalised because of the immortal science of Marxism-Leninism.

Some women will find solace in the ideas of gender abolition. Others will become revolutionaries because they want women to have guns. There are many roads to the same place and finger wagging will not bring anyone any quicker. In fact it may slow them down. Only once they are in the one place will shouting from the rafters do anything to unite them.

The problem with Marxist finger wagging, and more generally radical “shouting from the rafters” (which is far less specific to Marxism) is they cannot achieve what they set out to in a context of a severely depoliticised working class society. We have no audience yet. The majority of people who slave away day after day in this continent are either completely apolitical, or they lean right wing.

This isn’t to say they don’t often have a keen awareness that they are being exploited, or taken advantage of. But when Marxism, socialism or god forbid communism is brought up, we are still most likely going to be faced with an incredulous and suspicious population. “What have the communists ever done for me?” They will ask. They have a point.

In my view the Marxist sects are the point of contention for the RCO. Because they have needlessly disempowered themselves. Spontaneous appearances of new, creative and desperate protests that are not communist in their politics only reflect OUR failure. It is not the fault of the rally’s organisers that they are “politically compromising” or not mentioning the family form. It is our fault. It is the fault of socialists, the communists of the past, many of whom alienated an entire generation of women with their class reductionism (not to mention blatant sexism) and finger wagging. We should know better now.

These articles are for a later date comrades. When there is a communist movement. The movement will not be accelerated by attempting to drown seeds in fertiliser or extreme UV light. The movement of history should be cultivated by communists. It will not be hastened by clever critique or sloganeering, only by real people engaging in practical activities to further the consciousness of the class.

I believe that these rallies were a first step towards a women’s movement on the continent.

The Greens - Imperialism’s left-wing

MAYA KAUFMANN, ONLINE

We are told by Andrew Greene at the ABC:

For the first time in the party’s history, the Australian Greens have unveiled a formally costed policy to fund new military programs for locally made “defensive” weapons, while also pledging to slash billions of dollars in spending on American technology. [Andrew Greene, ABC, 22 March 2025]

This plan, which is pitched as an alternative to the AUKUS pact between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, would seek to establish an independent Australian arms industry and adopt a policy of pure self-defence. As David Shoebridge, the Greens spokesman on the matter, says, the first step to a peaceful foreign policy is to end Australia’s “dependence on the United States” for arms.

While the Communists would agree with the need to break the AUKUS Pact, this announcement by the Greens is no cause for celebration. In fact, given the longstanding opposition of the Greens party to the US Alliance, this move should be understood as a clarification of their position – not as a party of anti-imperialism, but rather as imperialism’s left wing.

Let us begin with the most obvious problem. The Greens are not in government, and are unlikely to be in government in the future. What this policy signals is a willingness to “play ball” with Labor Party defence policy, albeit on a limited basis. If the ALP was to propose an increase in military spending, as part of a generalised arms build up, it seems likely that the Greens would at least partly vote in favour. This does not bode well. The most pressing issue facing the international working class is the growing threat of a war between the United States and China. By embracing the language of “national defence” – which any war with China would be framed in – the Greens do not position themselves as potential opponents of this war.

There is also a deeper problem. Support for an “independent Australia” policy is not anti-imperialist in practice. Rather, it seeks to facilitate an independent Australian imperialism, liberated from its sub-imperial status under the American nuclear umbrella. Australia already plays a distinct imperialist role: in the South Pacific, in Papua New Guinea, in Indonesia. Australian capital is engaged in the systematic exploitation of the global periphery, and maintains a vested interest in the uneven exchange that characterises world trade.

An independent Australia would simply be an imperialist Australia. In this context, any defence of "national interests", any call of national defence, including those offered on a "left" basis are implicit defences of imperialism and imperialist interests.

This is why it is vital that communists reject the slogans of "national defence". The working class and the capitalist class do not share a common political program, including on the question of national defence. We must oppose the standing army, and its associated industries, as tools of ruling class power. Against the capitalist armed services, we pose the minimum slogan of the communist movement: the arming of the working class and a popular militia. On this question, even the socialist movement falls short, with Socialist Alliance and Victorian Socialists offering only a reduction of defence spending – not the abolition of the standing army.

This is of course not to say that we are pacifists. Far from it! Nor are we opposed to war! We put no stock in the prattling of the social pacifists who talk of "international arbitration", the "United Nations" or "a Rules Based International Order" – they are just another one of imperialism's many Mandarins. If there is a war on the horizon – and it is likely to be a World War – let the working class not fight for "national defence" or "the Western Alliance" or "free trade". Let it instead fight the social war, the war between classes, the global war for international proletarian revolution. That is the war we should be preparing for. It is a war we are determined to win.

Failures of a Palestine movement - a retrospective

V, ONLINE

Upon reflection of the historic failure which has been a pro-Palestinian 'solidarity' movement here in so-called 'Australia', it would be amiss to not beg the question "what went wrong?".

It would be fairly uncontroversial to state that the goal of all hitherto actions has been to "free Palestine", logically this should have been taken as a call to action. It was necessary then; to first, properly analyse the conditions of Australian involvement in the genocide of Palestinians; secondly, to utilise the theoretical knowledge achieved from all previous liberation and solidarity movements to best create the theoretical basis for action; and thirdly, undertaken the organising of an anti-Zionist 'front', in whatever form that may be best fit.

It is an unfortunate reality, that the driving premise of rallies has been the liberal idealism of 'movement-building' and creating 'discussion'; that is the idea that by the very existence of a rally, and by its numbers and loudness alone, that the imperialist bourgeoisie and the Australian colonial government, will see the error of its ways. This is largely self evident through the demands made by speakers and organisers, often calling on the Australian Government to take action. However rallies are not measured by the completion of their political demands, but by their existence; in which case, despite objectively worse conditions, and none of the political demands being carried out, these rallies have been an outstanding success!

Where an analytical framework existed, it quickly became merely a backdrop. Discussions of Australia's involvement in the genocide ended as quickly as they began. Talks regarding the F35 program, companies like ZIM shipping, and Elbit systems or our position in the UN, were glossed over before returning to the regularly scheduled empty slogans and recounts of tragedies to which the crowd will undoubtedly groan "Shame!" The very discussions that should have been a call to action, highlighting its unseriousness, laid the foundations for what in its absence would become our failure.

The theoretical conception, i.e. the education and agitation of supporters, was only a partial success. There was certainly a positive development in the partial education regarding the modern history of Palestine, as well as the occasional speech glazing the history of the Australian union movement. It should also be celebrated that various organisations such as Socialist Alliance, and Socialist Alternative had hosted seminars and lectures on relevant topics, even if this is limited to a handful of cadres. At rallies, however, there was very little taught in the way of meaningful actions that could be undertaken successfully, and certainly not so informed by past liberation struggles.

Finally, it is necessary to ponder the practical, organisational, aspect of the movement. Arguably this should have looked like calls to unionise, and organise into a political party tasked principally with the liberation of all people. It is to be said, that there were some initial success in community pickets. However, while rallies had initially praised groups such as Unionists for Palestine (U4P) for organising community actions, this was never followed by calls to unionise, and to fight for Palestine within workplaces. Ultimately, whether by lack of programmatic unity, or organisational ability to expand into more frequent actions, U4P would too become little more than stage dressing.

It should be brought into question then; since almost every socialist organisation in Australia has committed itself to the Palestinian movement, how then is it that we have fundamentally been unable to push the movement beyond its liberal idealism. Was it the inability to look past our own sectarianism? Was it the degeneration of our theoretical knowledge? or perhaps it was an unserious non-commitment. Nonetheless, it should be important to tell no lies and claim no easy victories, for if we have failed the Palestinian people, then we will be doomed to repeat our mistakes unless we are willing to self-criticise.

Plagued by the lack of materialist framework, analysis, theory, and praxis, our calls to "free Palestine" did not actualise. Attempting to correct this would certainly be to the enragement of the backwards and middling within the movement, attempting to push forward the necessity of organisation and theory will certainly draw the criticism of taking away from Palestinians. This is correct! However it is important then to decide our intentions; are we to be a dwindling interest group, can offer Palestine little more than bakesales and empty slogans, or are we socialists, who are wholly dedicated to the "workers and oppressed people of the world". If it is the latter, then it is necessary to correct ourselves, and embark upon a long march towards not only dismantling Australia's involvement in the genocide, but building real international networks of unions, communist partisans, and all those who are willing to accept our principle of liberation.

From al-Aqsa Flood to the Red Flood, from Gaza to the World October.

Smash World Imperialism with World Revolution. For Global Class War.

Write us a letter!

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email. A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms). In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

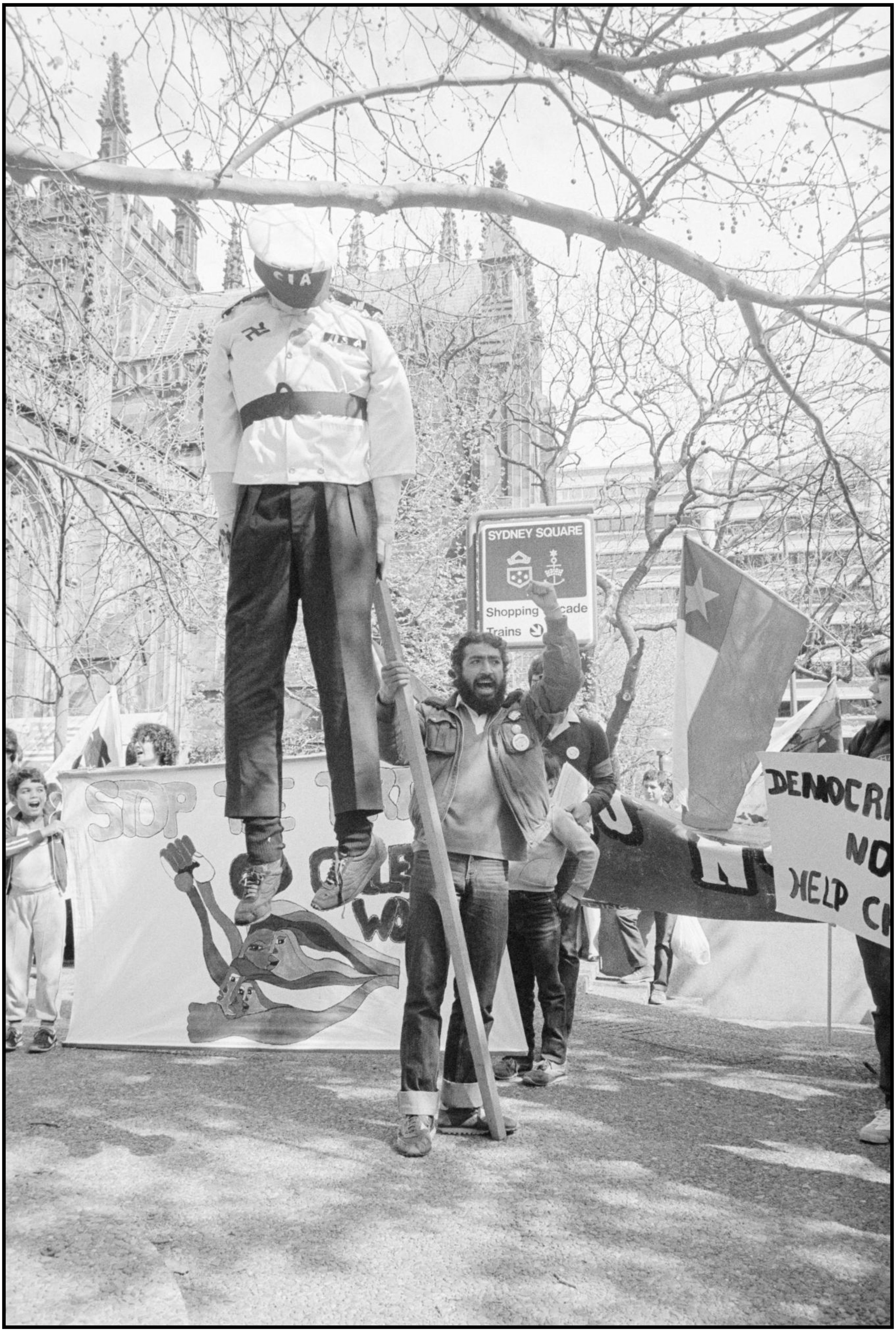
You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left. Letters should be sent to partisanmagazine@proton.me and contain the subject “Letter: [heading]”. The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email.

Journalism matters!

Many might turn their nose at journalism - and given the state of journalism currently, you’d be right to do it. But we live in the ‘information age’, where information is key, which is precisely why journalism matters. The mainstream press doesn’t report on many strikes, protests, rallies, and it definitely doesn’t report on what the Left is doing (why would it?). This is why communists need to be journalists, especially for the working class.

The Left is a confusing mess on the best of days. How are working people supposed to figure out what the Left is doing when the Left seems to do everything in its power to make it seem more obtuse?

This is why projects like Partisan matter, because we aim to report on the Left, and provide a platform for radicals and militants in the struggle. For this reason, Partisan matters. It is unique insofar as no other project blending quality independent journalism with communist political theory exists on the Australian Left. Or if it does, we haven’t heard of it yet.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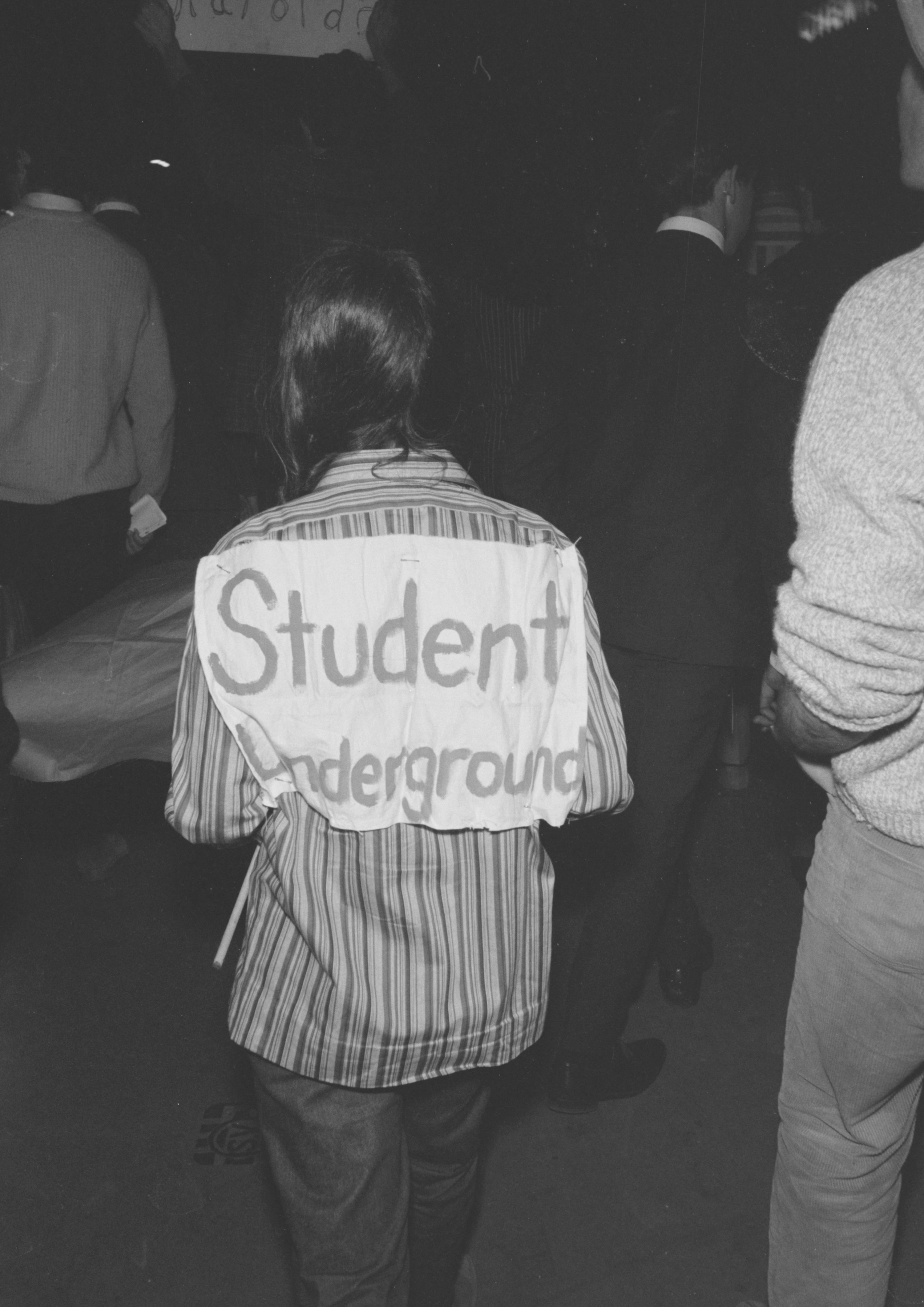
Turkish and Chilean exiles protest against their respective reactionary regimes, Sydney 1983.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